Cockerill and His Bantams

The Wartime Experiences of

Pilot Officer Albert J. Cockerill, DSO

A.J. Cockerill

Cockerill and His Bantams © 2025 by Albert John Cockerill is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

This work is protected by copyright. Any use of this content for training artificial intelligence systems, including but not limited to text and data mining, is expressly prohibited without prior written consent.

This license excludes content from other sources, including numerous illustrations, quotations, verse and text which are used without permission in this non-commercial memoir. These externally sourced items may have separate copyrights.

ISBN (Print): 978-0-646-72950-3
ISBN (PDF): 978-0-646-72951-0

Cover photograph:

Bert Cockerill and Crew

Back (L to R): Flt/Sgt K.A. Saxby, Wireless Operator; Sgt F. Smith, Rear Gunner;
Sgt C.C. Walker, Mid-Upper Gunner; Sgt J. Lord, Flight Engineer
Front (L to R): Flt/Sgt S.A. Green, DFM, Bomb Aimer;
Pilot Officer A.J. Cockerill, DSO, Captain and Pilot; Flt/Sgt H.R. Day, DFM, Navigator

Figure 1: Pilot Officer Bert Cockerill, DSO on returning to Australia, 1945.

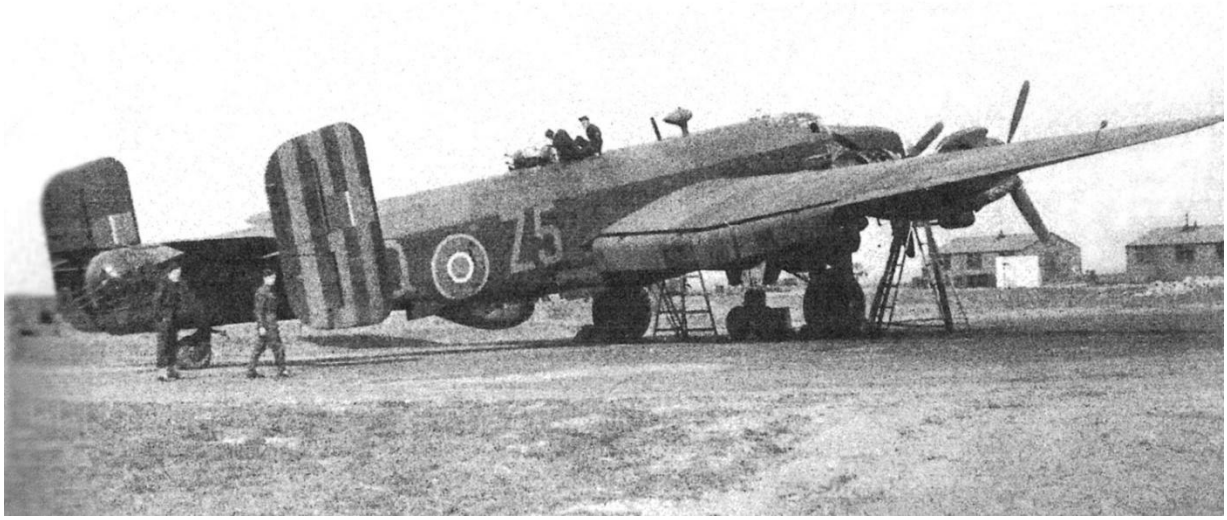


Figure 2: Handley Page Halifax B Mk. III, Z5 "Q-Queenie", serial NA619, 462 Squadron RAAF.
Piloted by Bert Cockerill on numerous occasions, including his final DSO awarded flight on 15th October, 1944.

Contents

Contents 5
List of Figures 7
Preface 9
Prelude 10
Beginnings 15
Into the Army – *Fiat lux* 18
Into the Air Force – *Per ardua ad astra* 27
To Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) 34
Commissioning 50
Post Graduation 54
The Voyage to New York 56
New York 60
Crossing the Atlantic 63
In the United Kingdom 65
To the Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) 69
To the Operational Training Unit (OTU) (Course 77) 78
To the Battle Course at Acaster Malbis (Course 26) 85
V-1 Flying Bomb Attack 88
To No. 1658 Conversion Unit, Riccall, Yorkshire (Course 38) 91
To 578 RAF Squadron, Burn, Yorkshire 94
Into Battle 101
- Operation 1: 1st August, 1944 102
- Debriefing 102
- Operation 2: 3rd August, 1944 103
- Operation 3: 5th August, 1944 104
- Operation 4: 6th August, 1944 105
- Operation 5: 7th August, 1944 105
- Operation 6: 9th August, 1944 106
- Operation 7: 11th August, 1944 107
- Leaflets 107
- Window 107
- Operation 8: 12th – 13th August, 1944 109
- Operation 9: 15th August, 1944 111
- Operation 10: 16th – 17th August, 1944 111
- Operation 11: 18th – 19th August, 1944 113

To 462 RAAF Squadron at RAF Base Station, Driffield, East Yorkshire 118

Operation 12: 3rd September, 1944 120
Operation Penguin: The V-2 Ballistic Missile 121
Operation 13: 9th September, 1944 123
Operation 14: 10th September, 1944 123
Operation 15: 11th September, 1944 123
Operation 16: 12th September, 1944 124
Flak and Searchlights 125
Operation 17: 13th September, 1944 126
Operation 18: 15th – 16th September, 1944 126
Operation 19: 17th September, 1944 127
Exercise: 19th September, 1944 127
Exercise: 23rd September, 1944 127
Operation 20: 23rd – 24th September, 1944 128
Operation 21: 25th September, 1944 128
Operation 22: 26th September, 1944 129
Exercise: 27th September, 1944 130
Operation 23: 30th September, 1944 130
Operation Hurricane 131
Operation 24: 14th October, 1944 132
Operation 25: 14th – 15th October, 1944 133
Recovery and Conclusion 137
Postscript: Life After The War 146
APPENDICES 149
APPENDIX 1 – Early Miscellany 150
APPENDIX 2 – Treatise on Bravery 152
APPENDIX 3 – "Stage Coach" 153
APPENDIX 4 – 462 Squadron Photo with Halifax 157
APPENDIX 5 – Pictures from the *Pilot's and Engineer's Notes Halifax III* 158
APPENDIX 6 – Crew Letter Airgraph 163
APPENDIX 7 – Miscellaneous Papers 165
APPENDIX 8 – DSO, Awards and Certificate of Service 168
APPENDIX 9 – The New 462 Squadron Badge 170
APPENDIX 10 – Summary of Operations and Maps 171

List of Figures

Figure 1: Pilot Officer Bert Cockerill, DSO on returning to Australia, 1945. 3
Figure 2: Handley Page Halifax B Mk. III, Z5 "Q-Queenie", serial NA619, 462 Squadron RAAF. 4
Figure 3: Bert's home at 78 West Street, South Casino, NSW. 17
Figure 4: Notice to Recruits. 19
Figure 5: In the Army and on leave. Bert at home with his mother Josephine, 6th June, 1942. 21
Figure 6: Certificate of Discharge from the Army. 27
Figure 7: Identity Card, front and rear (top and bottom panels respectively). 28
Figure 8: A happy looking group of Aircrew Trainees, 1942, Flight 32H, No. 2 Initial Training School, Bradfield Park, Sydney, NSW. 29
Figure 9: Bert on 5th October, 1942 in Martin Place, Sydney, in Air Force uniform with white flash in cap signifying Aircrew Trainee (Pilot). 30
Figure 10: Bert and Joyce at the ball in the Sydney Town Hall, 17th October, 1942. 33
Figure 11: Engagement notice in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14th November, 1942. 34
Figure 12: Tiger Moth biplanes. 35
Figure 13: Airspeed Oxford monoplane. 40
Figure 14: No. 3 Squadron, No. 31 Pilots' Course 1943, No. 1 SFTS Point Cook. 41
Figure 15: Ted Lawson in the cockpit of a Tiger Moth at Western Junction EFTS, Tasmania. 42
Figure 16: Bert, Ted and friend on weekend leave at Lorne, Victoria. 43
Figure 17: *The Australasian*, 24th April, 1943, aircraft and Allied Troops participate in Loan Parade. 48
Figure 18: Bert being invested with the Pilot's Wings Flying Badge. Graduation Day Wings Parade, Point Cook, 16th June, 1943. 49
Figure 19: *The Sun*, Thursday, 17th June, 1943. "Wings Parade for Young Pilots". 50
Figure 20: Receipt for Entrance Fee to the Sergeants' Mess RAAF Station, Point Cook. 55
Figure 21: Matson Line *AMS Monterey*, 20,000 tons. 56
Figure 22: Postcard showing Triborough and Hell-Gate Bridges, New York City. 58
Figure 23: Fort Slocum. 59
Figure 24: Barracks at Fort Slocum. 59
Figure 25: Fort Slocum Enlisted Man's Pass. 60
Figure 26: Signed photo from John Brownlee, performing at *The Met*. 61
Figure 27: Messing Card on *Q.E.* Atlantic crossing, front and rear sides. 63
Figure 28: Sleeping Quarters Card on *Q.E.* Atlantic crossing. 64
Figure 29: Cunard White Star Liner *Queen Elizabeth*, 85,000 tons. 64
Figure 30: *QE* at New York, 6th July, 1945 returning 15,000 American Servicemen from Europe with a crew of 980. 65
Figure 31: *Metropole* (L) and *Grand* (R) Hotels, Brighton. 66
Figure 32: West and Palace Piers and sea front, Brighton. 67
Figure 33: The Royal Pavillion, Brighton. 67
Figure 34: Forth Bridge across the Firth of Forth. 71
Figure 35: Postcard of John Knox's House, Edinburgh. 71
Figure 36: Bomber Command Crest. 79
Figure 37: The Vickers Wellington, "Wimpy". 79
Figure 38: Bert's Escape Kit photos. 85
Figure 39: General Eisenhower's message to General Marshall regarding Normandy Landings. 87
Figure 40: Message from General Eisenhower to all the armed forces in advance of the Allied Landings. 88

Figure 41: V-1 “Cut-away” image, US Air Force. 90
Figure 42: V-1 and Balloon Barrage related images. 91
Figure 43: Handley-Page Halifax II. 93
Figure 44: Handley-Page Halifax BII Series I.. 94
Figure 45: The Badge of 578 Squadron. 95
Figure 46: Halifax III. 97
Figure 47: Balloon Barrage over London. 104
Figure 48: Allied propaganda leaflet dropped during operations. 108
Figure 49: *Daily Express,* 18th August, 1944, covering operations conducted on 15th and 16th – 17th August. 113
Figure 50: *Daily Express,* 18th August, 1944, covering operations conducted on Sterkrade. 114
Figure 51: Halifax B Mk. III, LK “H” serial LK809, 578 Squadron Burn. 115
Figure 52: Badge of RAF Station, Driffield. 118
Figure 53: The Badge representing both Australian Squadrons 466 and 462. 118
Figure 54: British scientific experts experimenting with a V-2 rocket at Cuxhaven, Germany, November 1945. 122
Figure 55: A V-2 rocket launched under British supervision as part of Operation Backfire, October 1945.. 122
Figure 56: Nearly 10,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Le Havre (Seine-Maritime) in September 1944. 124
Figure 57: Cover letter for Bert's back-dated commission to rank of Pilot Officer (see also p.166). 140
Figure 58: Medical Board Certificate. 141
Figure 59: Postagram from RAF Air Chief Marshal A.T. Harris with congratulations on award of DSO. 143
Figure 60: Letter from RAAF Air Vice Marshal H.N. Wrigley with congratulations on award of DSO. 144
Figure 61: Copy of Ken Saxby's Log Book with AOC's commendation on completion of operational tour. 145
Figure 62: Programme of the Home Guard Stand-Down Parade at Hyde Park, 3rd December, 1944. 145
Figure 63: Bert in Martin Place, Sydney, Investiture Day, 13th April, 1946. 147
Figure 64: Post-war 462 Squadron Badge that Bert helped to design. 148

Preface

This autobiography is the World War II memoir of Pilot Officer Albert John ("Bert") Cockerill, who signed up to serve the war effort with the express goal of becoming a pilot. He achieved his goal and served in the Royal Australian Air Force with Bomber Command in 578 and then 462 Squadrons, flying Halifax III aircraft on 25 missions. He was seriously injured in October 1944 on what became his last mission, and somehow managed to fly his aircraft and crew back to safety. He was subsequently awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his heroic conduct. Aside from the Preface and Postscript which were added after his death, Bert's memoir was largely written in his retirement well after the war, drawing on records and history he researched to give the story context. This work has been prepared with the help of daughter Linda and her husband Tas van Ommen. This text is prepared primarily for the enjoyment of family, friends and others who have interest in this history. Any errors or shortcomings in crediting sources are unintentional. Finally, for those who are interested in the origin of the title, at the risk of being a 'spoiler', detail of how it arose can be found on page 102.

Prelude

Germany's surrender on 11th November, 1918 brought the Great War of 1914-18 to an end.

The Weimar Republic was established under a democratic constitution. However, the war had seriously impaired Germany's economy and its ability to convert quickly to a peace-time industrial situation with limited resources.

The Allies' demands for reparations exacerbated the poor socio-economic situation.

The Germans in general were aggrieved by the terms of the Armistice but could do little about it except delay the payment of reparations.

On Black Thursday, 24th October, 1929, the New York Stock Exchange lost 12.8% of its value, which triggered a devastating, long-lasting world-wide economic depression accompanied by mass unemployment and social upheaval.

In Germany monetary inflation sky-rocketed causing serious difficulties for the population and the government.

The nation being highly industrialised had many trade unions with Communist Party members who fomented unrest. The policies of the Communist Party were anathema to the National Socialist Party better known as the Nazi Party.

Taking advantage of the unstable situation, the Nazi Party seized power in 1933, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler as Führer. The Party established an oppressive dictatorial regime restoring order under a harsh discipline.

The Nazi Party promoted the idea that Germans were a superior race of people and those who didn't fit the Party's criteria were to be banished through various means. On 14th July, 1933 by way of accomplishing this objective the Nazi Party suppressed all other political parties and passed a law that provided for the sterilisation of two million people deemed unfit for reproduction.

All dictators find it essential to blame the cause of their nation's ills on someone or something. In this case the Nazi Party's scapegoat was the Jewish population, which was relentlessly persecuted with the ultimate objective of eliminating all Jews in Germany and subsequently in any country that the German army occupied.

The Nazi Party aimed to retrieve former German territories that had been lost following the 1918 surrender. Consequently the country was being prepared for war with the slogan "Guns before butter".

In 1936 a coalition of the fascist dictatorships was established between Germany, Italy and Japan known as the Axis Powers. These dictatorships had aggressive expansionist policies, which they pursued without active opposition by the League of Nations.

Japan lacking natural resources such as petroleum, iron and coal, essential in the pursuit of becoming a modern industrialised nation aimed to obtain these resources through its expansionist policy, which was promoted under the title of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" covering Korea, China, South East Asia, Australia and the Pacific Islands.

During 1935 and 1936 Hitler's army occupied territories along the Rhine River, which had been held by the French since the Great War. On 12th March, 1938 he annexed Austria.

His next objective was to bring under German control Bohemia and Moravia referred to as the Sudetenland where a high proportion of the population spoke German. These areas were within the republic of Czechoslovakia. France and Great Britain who were allies of Czechoslovakia became alarmed at this situation and brought heavy pressure to bear on the Prague government to make far-reaching concessions in order to avoid war. At a conference in Munich in September 1938 the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain directly intervened to secure Czech acceptance of Hitler's ultimatum for the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany. Then by stirring up trouble between the Czechs and Slovaks he occupied the country and declared it a protectorate of the German Reich in March 1939.

Notwithstanding that the British and French governments had a pact of mutual assistance with Poland Hitler's next major move was against Poland, which he invaded on 1st September, 1939. Two days later Britain and France after delivering an ultimatum demanding the immediate withdrawal of the invading forces, which was ignored, declared war on Germany.

On 3rd September, 1939 the Prime Minister of Australia, Robert G. Menzies announced that it was his "melancholy duty" to inform the Australian people that since Britain had declared war on Germany, Australia was also at war.

At the declaration of war Australia was virtually unprepared for such an event. The country was gradually put on a war footing with many everyday items subject to rationing, petrol especially, which severely affected the mobility of the population. Eighteen-year-olds were subjected to call-up for service in the army. Certain occupations were classified as "reserved occupations", which exempted those in them from the military call-up with its possible risk to life and limb. No doubt this was necessary to enable the country to function in the production of essential goods and services.

On 17th July, 1940 conscription in Australia was extended to include the call-up for 24-year-olds. Later that year on 13th December, the call-up was extended to include single men up to the age of 33.

In 35 days Poland was overrun by the German army after which Norway and Denmark were occupied.

The invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium and France began on 10th May, 1940. The Dutch and Belgian armies surrendered before the end of May, the British Expeditionary Force was driven into the sea at Dunkirk, and by the middle of June the French requested an armistice.

On 18th June,1940 following the fall of France Winston Churchill made the clarion call to his nation and indeed the English-speaking people of the world:

> *What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the War. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say 'this was their finest hour'.*

The Italian Fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini hoping to gain some advantage for Italy following the collapse of Scandinavian and European countries entered the war on 16th June, 1940.

Hitler's next objective was to invade Britain. The first part of his plan depended on the German Air Force gaining air superiority over the Royal Air Force following which his land forces would carry out the invasion under the code name Operation Sea Lion.

The Battle of Britain fought in the air over Britain between the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force was won by the RAF. According to an Air Ministry decision the battle took place from 10th July, until 31st October, 1940.

It was on 20th August, 1940 that the British Prime Minister, Winston S. Churchill made the famous announcement:

> *The gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire and, indeed, throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen, who, undaunted by odds, unweary in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the world war by their prowess and their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.*

Hitler then changed his tactic to night bombing of British cities, which caused much damage and loss of life.

With the Luftwaffe continuing its bombing campaign against Britain, the German army advancing on all fronts and German U-Boats inflicting heavy losses on shipping the future for Britain and the free world looked grim. Faced with this serious situation Winston Churchill in a defiant speech on 22nd June, 1941 rallied his people when he said:

> *We shall bomb Germany by day as well as night in ever-increasing measure, casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs, and making the German people taste and gulp each month a sharper dose of the miseries they have showered upon mankind.*

Following his defeat in the Battle of Britain Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in an attempt to overthrow its Communist regime headed by the hard-line dictator Joseph Stalin.

Meanwhile the German U-Boat campaign against Allied shipping continued unabated resulting in the loss of many ships, their cargoes and lives.

Much of the German military success can be attributed to the blitzkrieg or lightning attack by the army and air force. Led by very able military commanders and forces equipped with modern arms, the opposing forces, with inferior equipment and poor leadership, soon succumbed to their superiority.

In Spain a civil war raged from 1936 to 1939. The nationalist forces were led by the dictator Francisco Franco against the republicans. An International Brigade was formed comprised of volunteers from many nations to assist the republican forces. The Soviet Union also rendered assistance to the republicans. Hitler assisted Franco by sending elements of the Luftwaffe. Using bombers and Stuka dive-bombers they perfected their bombing and strafing techniques against the innocent citizens of towns and cities.

Following these devastating aerial attacks Pablo Picasso, the painter, produced in 1937 his famous Surrealist painting titled “Guernica”, depicting the bombing and burning of the town of Guernica by the German Luftwaffe.

In the end Franco’s forces prevailed and his oppressive dictatorship endured until his death in 1975.

In the mid-1930s Mussolini invaded the poor African country of Abyssinia now known as Ethiopia, causing the Emperor, Haile Sebassie to flee to the West. His next incursion was into North Africa followed by an invasion of the Balkans. These two adventures met with little success.

Italian forces advancing along the North African coast posed a threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal with the consequence that British Commonwealth forces were called on to stop the advance, which they did with considerable success. Mussolini called for assistance and Hitler sent forces commanded by General Rommel, known as the “Desert Fox”, who repulsed the British forces and came within striking distance of Cairo.

This desperate situation prompted Prime Minister Winston Churchill to place General Montgomery in charge of the British forces. With increased supplies of guns, tanks and aircraft and the use of clever tactics Montgomery routed the German forces.

The Japanese had invaded China and in December 1937 her military forces attacked Nanking in an unparalleled act of savagery and brutality, which became known as the infamous “Rape of Nanking”. Reporters witnessing this atrocity took photos of the event.

The Casino School of Arts regularly arranged lectures on a wide range of subjects and I remember attending a slide-show and talk by a reporter on this tragedy. Many Chinese members of the local community attended this meeting.

While the Japanese occupation of much of China continued the Japanese and Chinese forces engaged in military conflict.

In October, 1941 Hideki Tojo became Premier of Japan and assumed virtual dictatorial powers, taking over the posts of Minister of War and Chief of the General Staff. Under his leadership the Japanese expansionist policy referred to as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere continued apace with the invasion of south-east Asian countries including the Philippines.

On 7th December, 1941 the Japanese carried out a bold attack with carrier-borne aircraft on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands in which the American Pacific Fleet suffered serious losses. This infamous action caused President Franklin D. Roosevelt to immediately declare war on the Axis Powers to the great relief of Winston Churchill.

On 23rd January, 1942 a Japanese force landed at Rabaul in New Britain overwhelming a small Australian garrison. This was the beginning of the Battle for Australia.

Singapore fell to the Japanese invaders on 15th February, 1942 with the capture of 70,000 British and 15,000 Australian soldiers.

While much detail has been omitted this brief outline of the world-wide war situation at this time shows that the Allied nations were faced with a tremendous task to overcome the aggressive actions of the Axis Powers. The future of the free world was under grave threat by the forces of evil.

The Japanese continued their successful southward advance and landed on the north coast of Papua New Guinea, which country they hoped to control prior to conducting an all-out attack on Australia.

Following their landing on the north coast of Papua New Guinea the Japanese mounted an attack over the Owen Stanley Range along the Kokoda Trail with the objective of capturing Port Moresby on the south coast where they planned to mobilise their forces prior to invading the Australian mainland.

The attack on Australia's mandated territory and its proximity to Australia's shores caused considerable apprehension in the Australian population.

On 25th April, 1942 the superior battle-hardened fanatical forces of the Japanese army met the poorly trained Australian conscript force in what became known as the Battle of the Kokoda Trail.

With limited resources and poor back-up the Australians fought bravely but were gradually forced to retreat. The conscripts were eventually relieved by the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), which won the Battle of the Kokoda Trail at considerable cost.

Following their withdrawal the Australian conscripts attended a parade in Port Moresby where they were addressed by General Blamey, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army.

Instead of boosting morale and praising these soldiers for their valiant effort in defending Australia from attack he castigated them for retreating. If anything, he was to blame for his incompetence and lack of leadership in not providing a suitably trained force, reinforcements and supplies.

This attack on Australia's fighting men, who had been in violent combat with the enemy under the most arduous conditions did nothing for his already poor reputation.

Naval battles were taking place in the Western Pacific between the Japanese and US and Australian navies. These battles were not always conclusive with both sides suffering serious losses. However, on 8th May, 1942 the Battle of the Coral Sea ended when a US fleet turned back a Japanese invasion force heading for Port Moresby.

The US General Douglas MacArthur having escaped from the Philippines following the Japanese invasion of that country arrived in Australia where the government placed him in charge of the military forces to resist the Japanese advance.

General MacArthur had his Head Quarters in Brisbane and under his command men and materiel soon started to arrive from the USA.

Down the eastern sea-board of Australia much defensive work was put in place to hinder and repel the expected Japanese invasion.

Beginnings

I was born at Casino, in the north-east corner of New South Wales and had lived with my family on a dairy farm at Bentley, 11 miles north of Casino. After completing my Primary School education at Bentley my parents decided that I would have to board in Casino to attend High School. I was not particularly happy where I was boarding. A friend, Bob Muggleton, also a country boy, who was in my class boarded at Mrs. Morgan's Guest House, which was previously the Richmond Private Hospital, so it was agreed that I change my place of abode. Other guests in residence were bank officers and Ronald James Finch, a school teacher, who was in his early twenties. Ron and I got along very well. Ron had a mantel radio and after the evening meal we would listen to a couple of exciting serials, one of which stimulated the imagination with its settings in darkest Africa. Occasionally Ron's mother, who lived in a town on the New England Tableland, sent him the most delicious coconut-ice, which he shared with me. The change of residence had made my life much more congenial. However, boarding in Casino ended at the end of 1936 when it was decided that my sister and I would travel by bus each day to attend the Lismore High School. After a year this marathon effort ended when my parents decided to leave the farm and reside in Casino where I and a couple of other lads became Sanctuary Servers in St. Mark's Church. Ron Finch, who was a Server vacated that position and concentrated on leading the Church Choir and in doing so conferred on me his badge of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary.

Ron enlisted in the RAAF on 2nd February, 1941 and after completing training in Australia was posted to the UK. Subsequently Ron was undergoing further training at No. 10 Operational

Training Unit (OTU), Abingdon Aerodrome, Berkshire. On a night-time exercise, in the dark on 17th April, 1942, when flying in an Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Mk. V, AD 706 bomber fitted with two Rolls-Royce Marlin engines, in attempting to land the aircraft overshot the runway, failed to gain height and crashed at 02:08 a.m., killing all 5 crewmen, including Flying Officer (F/O) Ron Finch. Ron was buried at 12:30 p.m. GMT on 22nd April, 1942 at Brookwood Cemetery, England. Lost – a good man and a good friend.

In my opinion the Whitley was an ugly, ungainly, under-powered and unsuccessful first-line bomber. One landed at Burn airfield one day when I was there.

On leaving school I was employed as a clerk at the Casino Co-operative Dairy Society Ltd., which at that time was solely engaged in the manufacture of butter much of which was exported to the United Kingdom. The Co-operative sold butter under its brand name of "Tenby". Butter was also packed and sold under the "Allowrie" brand for the Sydney based Producers' Co-operative Distributing Society Ltd.

My immediate supervisor at the Casino Co-op. Dairy was Albert George (Alby) Grand a little over three years my senior in age being born on 30th July, 1920. He was a good guide and friend in my first job. Both of us were interested in aviation and hoped that sometime in the future we could become pilots. Following the advent of war Alby enlisted in the RAAF on 11th November, 1940 and trained as a pilot. On completion of the Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) course in Australia he was posted to a Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in Canada where he trained in the single engine Harvard aircraft. After further training in England he was posted to 460 RAAF Squadron at Brighton, East Yorkshire, which was equipped with Vickers Wellington aircraft. Alby gained commissioned officer rank on 1st July, 1942.

On the night of 4th – 5th August, 1942 when flying a Wellington Z.1422, Alby and his crew participated in a Gardening Operation, that is, minelaying in a water way, on the heavily defended port of St. Nazaire, a U-Boat base in France. Following take-off nothing was heard from the aircraft, which failed to return. It was reported missing presumably as a result of enemy action. It was assumed that the aircraft crashed in the sea near Quiberon, Brittany resulting in the loss of all five crew members on 4th August, 1942. The body of one crew member Sgt. T.C. Hobgen was washed up by the sea near Port Ivy. He was buried on 24th August, 1942 at Quiberon Cemetery.

Gardening Operations were always very dangerous because aircraft approached the target area at low level to lay the mines rendering them vulnerable to the full force of port and naval defences.

Sadly, a good friend together with his crew had paid the supreme sacrifice.

Figure 3: Bert's home at 78 West Street, South Casino, NSW.

Turning 18 on 27th August, 1941 with a worsening war situation I volunteered to join the RAAF to do my bit in defence of the country, hoping to achieve my ambition to learn to fly an aeroplane.

On 19th February, 1942 while undergoing physical and knowledge tests for entry to the Air Force at the RAAF Personnel Reception Depot at Woolloomooloo, Sydney, the shocking news came through at lunch time that Japanese bombers had attacked Darwin.

It was subsequently learned that over 300 bombs were dropped by Japanese aircraft.

In just over an hour 188 Japanese planes – 36 Zero fighters, 71 dive-bombers and 81 level bombers – sank eight ships in the harbour, destroyed the airfield and killed 243 people. Another 300 were wounded.

It was the biggest loss of life on Australian soil in a single day.

For security reasons very little information was published at the time regarding this terrible devastation.

Among the written knowledge tests for entry into the RAAF were several pages of questions with multiple answers where one was required to select the correct answer.

One particular question, which amused me and remains in my memory was as follows:-

```
In a set of railway lines on a bend, which part of the railway lines
will be subject to the most wear?
      (a) the outside of the inside rail
      (b) the inside of the inside rail
      (c) the inside of the outside rail
      (d) the outside of the outside rail
```

Successfully passing the entry tests I was placed on the Air Force Reserve to await call-up for aircrew training.

It was Sir Archibald Sinclair, who said that, "To be selected for aircrew training is a great distinction."

While awaiting call-up I with many others were required to attend maths classes in our home towns. The night classes held once a week over three months consisted mainly of algebra and navigational exercises.

Into the Army – *Fiat lux*

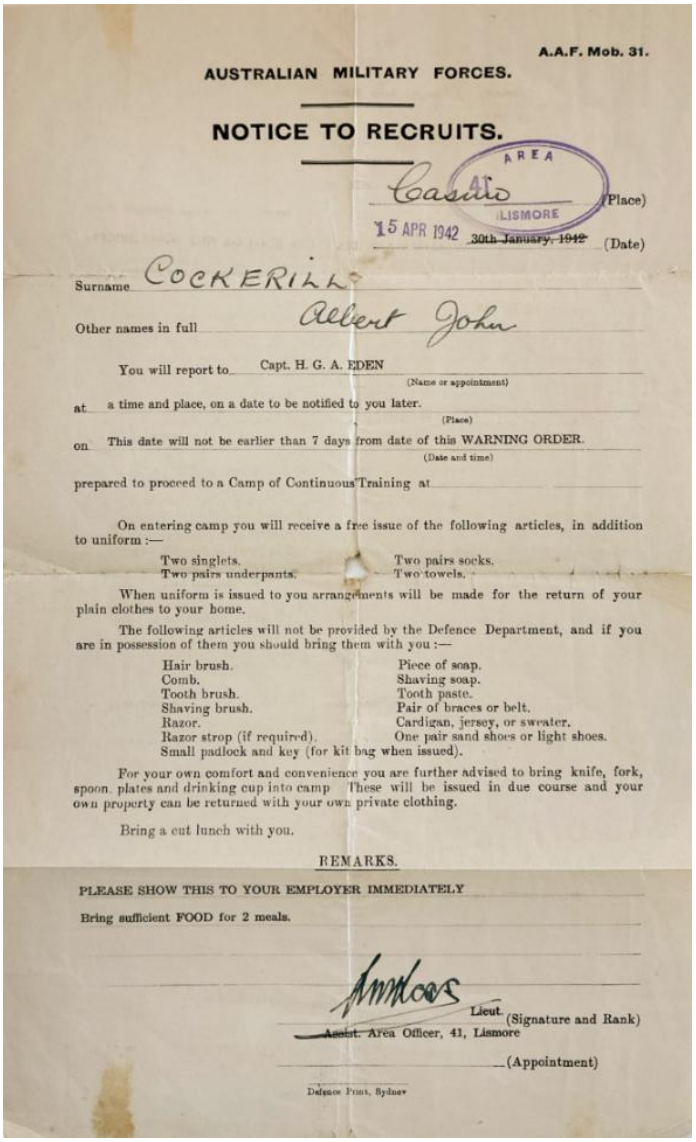
The Commonwealth Government having introduced compulsory military training for my age group, I was in due course called-up for army service prior to my call-up for the Air Force.

At Casino on 15th April, 1942 I was inducted into the Australian Military Forces (Citizen Forces) and was required to attend the military establishment at the Sydney Showground where I received the usual medical examination and vaccination shots before being posted with the rank of Sapper to the 62nd Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Company of the Australian Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Engineers' training school at Scheyville, near Richmond, NSW. I had requested a posting to the artillery or anti-aircraft guns but was informed that there were no vacancies in those units so the next best thing was the searchlights.

Living conditions at Scheyville were primitive. Our sleeping quarters were in an old abandoned wooden church at the bottom of the hill on top of which was a large substantial Head Quarters building. We slept on palliasses, which were hessian bags filled with straw. Blankets were issued for warmth.

The latrines were surrounded by a six feet high hessian screen behind which there were approximately 10 holes in a long bench-like set-up without individual screening.

The Army and the other services were concerned about maintaining their personnel in good health, so shortly after our arrival at Scheyville we were required to attend an evening lecture by a doctor on all aspects of venereal diseases. Special emphasis was given to prevention of these diseases.



A.A.F. Mob. 31.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

NOTICE TO RECRUITS.

AREA 41 LISMORE

Casino (Place)

15 APR 1942 ~~30th January, 1942~~ (Date)

Surname COCKERILL

Other names in full Albert John

You will report to Capt. H. G. A. EDEN (Name or appointment)

at a time and place, on a date to be notified to you later. (Place)

on This date will not be earlier than 7 days from date of this WARNING ORDER. (Date and time)

prepared to proceed to a Camp of Continuous Training at

On entering camp you will receive a free issue of the following articles, in addition to uniform :—

Two singlets. Two pairs socks.
Two pairs underpants. Two towels.

When uniform is issued to you arrangements will be made for the return of your plain clothes to your home.

The following articles will not be provided by the Defence Department, and if you are in possession of them you should bring them with you :—

Hair brush. Piece of soap.
Comb. Shaving soap.
Tooth brush. Tooth paste.
Shaving brush. Pair of braces or belt.
Razor. Cardigan, jersey, or sweater.
Razor strop (if required). One pair sand shoes or light shoes.
Small padlock and key (for kit bag when issued).

For your own comfort and convenience you are further advised to bring knife, fork, spoon, plates and drinking cup into camp. These will be issued in due course and your own property can be returned with your own private clothing.

Bring a cut lunch with you.

REMARKS.

PLEASE SHOW THIS TO YOUR EMPLOYER IMMEDIATELY

Bring sufficient FOOD for 2 meals.

Lieut. (Signature and Rank)

~~Assist.~~ Area Officer, 41, Lismore

(Appointment)

Defence Print, Sydney

Figure 4: Notice to Recruits.

Every morning reveille was sounded at 5:50 a.m. and after dressing very quickly we were called out on what was known as the “Emu Parade”. During that parade we were required to closely examine the parade ground and pick up rubbish such as cigarette butts, matches and any other rubbish. The intriguing thing about this was that every morning there was a similar amount of cigarette butts and matches on the ground. I found it difficult to imagine that we trainees were the cause of the rubbish, especially when we were required to clean the ground every morning.

A considerable amount of time was spent in learning to march around the parade ground in column of threes.

It was interesting to learn that not everyone could march as there was one fellow who lacked normal co-ordination between arms and legs.

During marching or walking as a foot moves forward the opposing arm does likewise, however, when this fellow tried to march as a foot moved forward his arm on the same side also moved

forward, which was quite amusing to watch. It certainly frustrated our drill instructor and it wasn't long before the trainee left the unit.

All letters were required to be placed in a special letter box and censored by officers or non commissioned officers (NCOs) prior to posting. The fact that a third party was scrutinizing our private correspondence meant that care had to be taken not to divulge anything that could be construed as useful to the enemy and the violation of privacy had, I believe, the effect of making my letters rather bland and probably uninteresting. However, within their limits they conveyed general information about where I was and what I was doing.

We were instructed in minute detail about every aspect of a 1914 issue of the ·303 Lee Enfield rifle.

The school was poorly equipped regarding searchlight equipment. Some brief theoretical instruction was given on the operation of a searchlight without any practical experience in its night-time operation because the only searchlight machine at the school didn't have a power supply.

On the night of 31st May, 1942 the station was alerted and we were roused from our palliasses and ordered to stand by. Advice was received that Sydney was under attack. After about two hours we were stood down. Later that morning we heard the news that Japanese midget submarines had entered Sydney Harbour and attacked shipping with torpedoes. Two submarines were caught and a third escaped to sea but was unable to join the mother ship and so far has not been found.

The submarines sank the barracks ship *HMAS Kuttabul* at Garden Island with the loss of 21 lives and wounding 10.

One became entangled in anti-submarine netting and deliberately blew itself up. Another was sunk by depth charges. The wreckage of both was raised and put on display at Circular Quay, where I saw them when on leave. I believe that these midget submarines are now on display at the War Memorial Museum in Canberra (see Appendix item p.150).

Before finishing the course, the "powers-that-be", decided that a concert was to be held and our sergeant instructor called for volunteers to assist with the program. He asked could anyone play a musical instrument. I signified that I could play the cornet so I was nominated for a cornet solo.

Prior to the concert we were given some leave, which allowed me to travel overnight by train to Casino where I was able to spend one night at home with my family and girlfriend Joyce Imeson before returning with the cornet.

Figure 5: In the Army and on leave. Bert at home with his mother Josephine, 6th June, 1942.

Catching a late train out of Sydney another fellow and I got off at the closest railway station to Scheyville with the foreboding name of Mulgrave. It was a pitch-black night with no lights anywhere. The station was about six miles from Scheyville and it took quite a long while walking quickly and following a winding gravel road to return to the camp.

In due course the night of the concert arrived and the pianist who was to accompany me asked me if I was a finished musician to which I replied that I was not. This was my first cornet solo and I had selected the popular tune, "Rainbow on the River", which I felt confident I could play quite well. However, by the time the curtain went up and the Master of Ceremonies announced my item I was feeling very nervous with the result that my mouth went dry and my performance was not as good as I had wished, nonetheless the fellows gave me a good clap. That, incidentally, was the last time I played the cornet. It also brought home to me the old soldier's adage, "Never volunteer for anything".

On Sunday, 7th June 1942 the Battle of Midway in the Pacific ended with a major United Sates victory over the Japanese. However, the ever-present threat of Japanese attack was demonstrated again when on Monday, 8th June, 1942 Japanese submarines shelled Newcastle on the NSW north coast but caused little damage.

After completing the training course at Scheyville several of us were posted to the Castlecrag searchlight location, which was situated in a northern Sydney suburb. We arrived there after dark

on the Sunday at the end of the third week in June. We were housed in tents at this location. As the name implies this unit was located on top of a stony ridge with very little level ground, which fell away to a deep gully. There was no electric power at the site so lanterns were used for lighting. A tannery was located about half a mile up the road from which unsavoury smells issued forth from time to time. Living conditions were very poor, exacerbated by the winter weather.

These field units comprised three searchlights, one of which was a master with two slaves. The operator of the master unit was connected by phone to the operator of the aircraft detector. When the target was located the detector operator advised the master unit accordingly and called for "Lights". The operators of the slaves followed the master light, which required some skill to be effective.

A searchlight consisted of a large concave mirror in front of which was located a mechanism holding an anode and a cathode. When power was applied to the mechanism a brilliant electric arc occurred across the gap between the anode and the cathode, the arc being magnified and reflected by the large mirror.

The arc operated at a very high temperature, which caused the carbon cathode to be gradually consumed. To prevent widening of the gap across which the arc occurred a worm gear mechanism held the carbon cathode and forced it forward at the same rate at which it was being consumed.

Great care had to be exercised during operation of the searchlight because of the high temperature involved and the brilliant light, which could cause serious damage to one's eyesight if one looked into the light during its operation. Tongs were used to extract the white-hot remnant of the carbon cathode when it reached the end of its life during operation of the light and to insert a fresh cathode. This work was required to be done quickly so that the light was out of operation for the shortest possible time. This operation called for a considerable amount of skill and dexterity as it was carried out through a small porthole in the metal casing surrounding the mirror.

Later on when stationed at the Frenchs Forest location a fellow visited us wearing very dark glasses with his side vision completely protected from light by black opaque material attached to the sides of the lenses. We were told that he had looked into a searchlight while it was operating resulting in damage to his eyesight.

For safety reasons in case of attack, it was policy to locate the power supply in a secluded position in the bush about 400 yards away from the searchlights. The power supply for this unit was in a gully surrounded by thick bush.

A typical yellow painted Caterpillar diesel engine drove a direct current electricity generator. There was a telephone link between the Command Post and the power unit. In the event of an alert the Command Post advised the operator of the power unit, who started the engine and in due course the Command Post gave the command "Power", whereupon the operator pushed home the big copper knife type master switch giving power to the searchlights. At the end of an alert the Command Post advised the power operator to stop the engine.

All personnel on the field unit were required to be multi-skilled regarding the operation of the searchlights and the power unit.

Personnel were required to carry out guard duty at the searchlights and at the power unit. Revolving shifts were practised, which meant two hours on duty and 10 hours off, right around the clock, however, these times could vary significantly depending on available manpower. It was an irksome business.

We were constantly bombarded with propaganda about fifth columnists and people whose objective was to disrupt the war effort. With these thoughts in mind it was not surprising to feel somewhat apprehensive while alone on guard duty in the middle of the night at the isolated power unit when one heard twigs breaking or other strange noises in the bush. It certainly kept one very alert with one's back to the power unit and rifle at the ready.

This was a new field unit, which was incomplete on our arrival so we were required to dig slit-trenches and fill and lay sandbags to protect the personnel, the searchlights and the Command Post.

Sand for the sandbags was procured at Curl Curl beach. On the second trip for this purpose the loaded lorry became bogged in the sand so we had to unload it and after moving it to safer ground reload the sand.

Not everything ran smoothly at the unit. Sometimes the unit was put out of action through causes beyond our control such as on 28th June, 1942 when the fan broke on the engine and a strong wind blew the sound locator over and damaged it.

We were taken by lorry on a familiarisation tour of the other searchlight locations around the Sydney area. Some were very well established with good accommodation for the men in houses commandeered by the army.

While at this location all personnel in the 62nd Anti-aircraft Searchlight Company were required to attend a shoot at the Chatswood Rifle Range using the ·303 Lee Enfield rifle and the Lewis machine gun. I had a good day achieving the highest score for the rifle and a high score for the machine gun.

Short leaves provided the opportunity to visit and sometimes to stay with aunts, uncles and cousins in the Sydney area. These relatives were on my father's side of the family. They were welcome breaks from the harsh conditions of army life.

At the beginning of July, 1942 I was pleased to be posted to the searchlight unit located at The Spit near The Spit bridge in Middle Harbour. This was a very scenic spot with many lovely launches and yachts moored in the harbour. The Spit bridge was interesting to watch when it was raised to allow boats to pass up and down Middle Harbour.

Our accommodation was a two storey building on the eastern side of Military Road opposite the searchlight unit located in The Spit Reserve. As usual no hot water was available so it was hard to be enthusiastic about cold showers in July.

On Sunday, 5th July, 1942 we spent the day in our field service uniforms as we had to have the location in spick and span order for an inspection by the heads of the Searchlight Company.

This unit was rather unique as it was fitted with a radar aircraft detector, which was very effective in detecting the presence of aircraft.

One day the corporal in charge of the location took me with him on a visit to the Sydney University where we saw the first radar unit imported from England for the detection of aircraft.

From 14th to 18th July, I was granted leave, which allowed me to make the long journey to Casino, where I spent two enjoyable nights at home with my girlfriend, Joyce and family.

Back at the unit, on Wednesday, 29th July, we were taken to the military establishment at George's Heights where a gas chamber was located. With gas masks on we were required to spend about 5 minutes in the chamber, which was filled with tear gas. Then without gas masks we were required to walk through the chamber with the result that tears came to our eyes, our noses ran and the shaven parts of our faces felt sore for a while afterwards. An unpleasant experience!

We were told that The Spit location was going to be used for another military purpose so the next day some of us were transferred to the Frenchs Forest location, which was in an isolated position well away from habitation. Consequently transport to the city was a problem for anyone planning a short leave from the location.

Here we slept in a corrugated galvanised iron hut. There was no electricity so lighting was provided by pressure lanterns. There was a cold shower. A small stream provided much of our water requirements. We ate in a little old house, which had been taken over by the Army. One of our members volunteered to be cook and did a wonderful job.

At this location the sound locator was composed of four large parabolic sound collectors mounted on a metal frame, which could be moved in any direction to pick up the target. The sound collectors were shaped like eggs with the tops cut off. The sound was picked up electronically and fed into a small cathode ray tube. While searching for the target the sine waves were scrambled all over the cathode ray tube screen. When the collectors were on target the sine waves shown on the cathode ray screen appeared as a small dot. The ABC logo illustrates a typical sine wave.

This sound locator remotely controlled the master searchlight so that when the locator had found the target the searchlight was switched on and the aeroplane was illuminated. We hoped!

This location was short staffed, which meant that we had to do two hour thirty minute guards during the night and four hours during the day. Superimposed on this situation the corporal in charge had the idea of making the unit the most efficient in the Company. This meant that periodically he would have practise alerts for the unit at all hours of the night. On being wakened from our sleep we had to get fully dressed and man the searchlights in the shortest possible time

while he timed us with his stopwatch. These were not popular exercises! Such exercises had not been practised at other locations where I had been stationed.

Receipt of a knitted balaclava from Joyce was most welcome especially when on guard duty during the cold nights.

On several occasions during early August our location was engaged in what was called "Air co-operation with the searchlights", which meant that the Air Force sent a plane into our area and we tried to illuminate it with our searchlights. These were interesting and good practical exercises, unfortunately they were rare events.

One day we participated in a route march from The Spit to Manly during which there were exercises in case of gas attack and an air raid. During the march the Company was divided in half and the other half tried to ambush us. We had lunch at Manly and during the afternoon attended a lecture. We all enjoyed the day out.

On a bright and sunny day with a cloudless sky I was on guard duty when scanning the sky I noticed a dark coloured long shaped unidentified flying object at a height of approximately 1,500 feet at an elevation of about 75º above the horizon in a north westerly direction. I notified the Commanding Officer, who confirmed the sighting and other members of the unit also viewed the object. The CO notified Head Quarters giving details of the angle of elevation, the azimuth bearing and approximate height. HQ notified all relevant units with the information but they were unable to detect the object, which disappeared from sight after about 20 minutes.

Under the Commonwealth Government's call-up program there were men aged between 18 and 34 years in the Searchlight Company. I found it interesting to meet and talk with the older fellows who had survived the Depression years and those who were quintessential working-class fellows. I cite two examples of these fellows who remain in my memory. The first worked as a farm labourer in the high cold country around Tumbarumba and Adaminaby in the Snowy Mountains region. Farm jobs were scarce during the Depression, which meant that he was often out of work. During those lean times he eked out a Spartan existence by trapping rabbits and selling their skins, while his diet consisted mainly of rabbit meat. In our discussions I could appreciate why his political leanings were towards Communism.

The second was Les Roy, who lived in Foveaux Street, Redfern an inner Sydney suburb.

Les invited me to his home prior to visiting his former place of work, namely, Arnott's biscuit factory at Homebush. His home was a typical Redfern terrace house with a narrow street frontage. Inside, a narrow hall ran down one side of the house. There was a small back yard.

At Arnott's large factory we saw the mass production of biscuits. Ingredients were placed in very large metal bowls fitted with giant mechanical mixers. When mixed the dough was placed in a distributor with multiple outlets, which shaped and cut the dough. The moist biscuits dropped onto a continuous wide metal belt, which traversed through an oven. Passing out of the oven the cooked biscuits travelled some distance to allow them to cool prior to packing. Les's knowledge of the factory enabled us to view all aspects of factory operations, which I found most interesting.

Another interesting occasion was when the "powers-that-be" arranged for a party of us to visit two large industrial organisations, namely, Australian Glass Manufacturers, (AGM) and Crown Crystal Glass Company, (CCG). At AGM bottles of all shapes and sizes were made at high speed by machines. At CCG various articles were made by glassblowers. The glassblower reached into the furnace, which contained red-hot molten glass and took a gob of molten glass with his blowpipe. He then blew into the blowpipe causing the molten glass to expand into a bubble then with a metal instrument he shaped the glass into the desired shape and with occasional blows and twists of the pipe the article was completed. We watched them making lantern globes. The furnace was a large circular domed construction with openings near floor level. The glassblowers were located around the furnace near the several openings. Working conditions were very hot.

On Friday, 28th August, during the absence of the Corporal and Lance Corporal I had the honour of being placed in charge of the location for the day.

The Command Post was a cosy dugout dug into rising ground and well protected by stout timber, galvanised iron and sandbags and provided good protection against inclement weather.

All communication in and out of the location passed through the Command Post and the same two or three fellows operated the Post.

Being proficient in all other operations of the unit, I was interested to learn how to operate the Post. I asked a fellow who often had the more desirable day shift how to operate the equipment but he was very reluctant to give me any instruction. No doubt he was concerned that I might pose a threat to his cushy job.

On Monday, 31st August, a sports competition was arranged between A and B Sections of the Searchlight Company. I went in nearly every event and managed to gain a place in some of them. Prizes for the winning Section were 12 hours' leave and 10 shillings for the Section's funds. We had a good day and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves but I don't remember who won.

At long last on Saturday, 5th September, 1942 I received the call-up notice for the RAAF advising me to report on Saturday, 12th September.

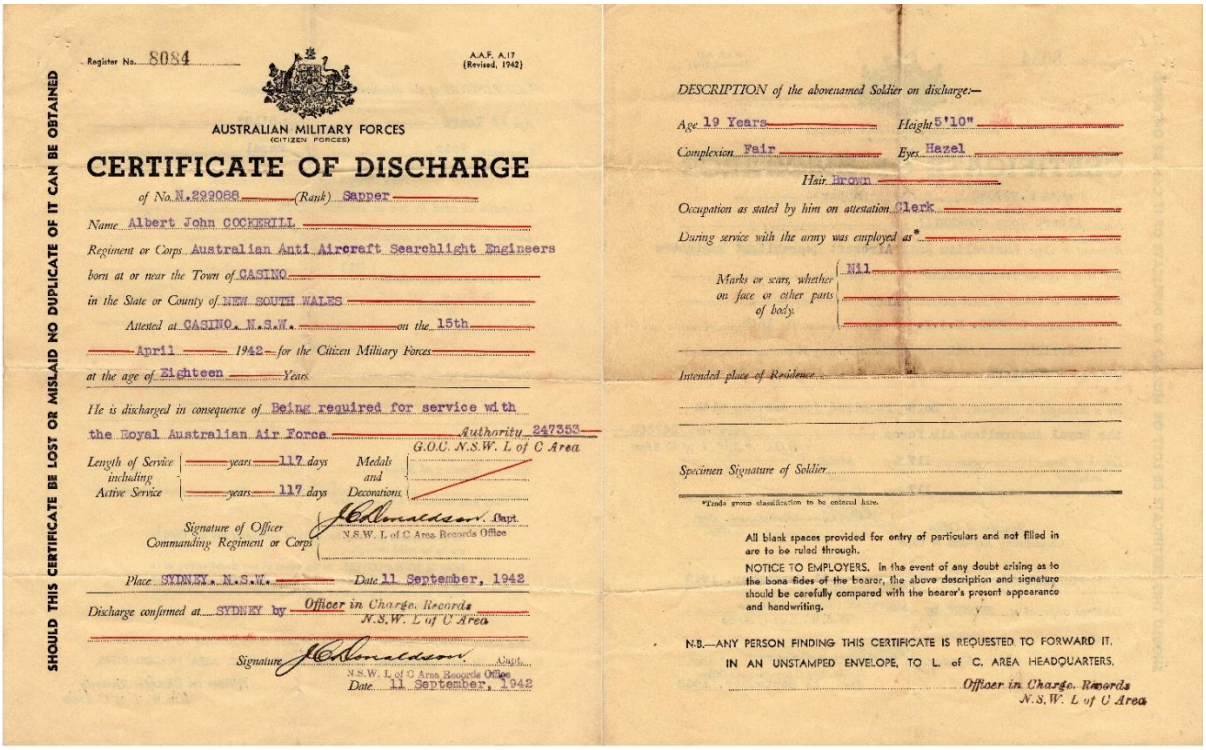
During the previous week six new men arrived at the location, which reduced considerably the work load for us. Their arrival made a significant difference to the night guard duty reducing it from two hours twenty minutes to one hour thirty minutes.

Prior to reporting to the RAAF, I was required to report to the Showground and return all army clothing except that which I was wearing. I kept a shirt, which cost me six shillings and sixpence.

In the Army we discussed many matters against a grim war situation. Of particular interest to me was the attitude of these conscripted fellows regarding their future intentions. Did they intend to join any of the volunteer services, such as the AIF, the RAN and the RAAF? One or two said they *might* eventually join the AIF but the overwhelming majority had no intention of joining any other service. Many were reluctant conscripts.

Another matter that puzzled me was the fact that during my time in the Army I didn't meet anyone who was in a similar position to me, that is, having joined one of the volunteer services, in my case the RAAF and awaiting call-up for that service.

Without regrets my Army career ended on Friday, 11th September, 1942 when I received my discharge. I now faced a new challenge with optimism.



SHOULD THIS CERTIFICATE BE LOST OR MISLAID NO DUPLICATE OF IT CAN BE OBTAINED

Register No. 8084 — A.A.F. A.17 (Revised, 1942)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES (CITIZEN FORCES)

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

of No. N.292088 (Rank) Sapper

Name Albert John COCKERILL

Regiment or Corps Australian Anti Aircraft Searchlight Engineers

born at or near the Town of CASINO

in the State or County of NEW SOUTH WALES

Attested at CASINO, N.S.W. on the 15th April 1942 for the Citizen Military Forces

at the age of Eighteen Years.

He is discharged in consequence of Being required for service with the Royal Australian Air Force Authority 247353 G.O.C. N.S.W. L of C Area

Length of Service including Active Service: years 117 days

Medals and Decorations:

Signature of Officer Commanding Regiment or Corps: J.C. Donaldson Capt. N.S.W. L of C Area Records Office

Place SYDNEY, N.S.W. Date 11 September, 1942

Discharge confirmed at SYDNEY by Officer in Charge, Records N.S.W. L of C Area

Signature J.C. Donaldson Capt. N.S.W. L of C Area Records Office

Date 11 September, 1942

DESCRIPTION of the abovenamed Soldier on discharge:—

Age 19 Years Height 5'10"

Complexion Fair Eyes Hazel

Hair Brown

Occupation as stated by him on attestation Clerk

During service with the army was employed as*

Marks or scars, whether on face or other parts of body: Nil

Intended place of Residence

Specimen Signature of Soldier

*Trade group classification to be entered here.

All blank spaces provided for entry of particulars and not filled in are to be ruled through.

NOTICE TO EMPLOYERS. In the event of any doubt arising as to the bona fides of the bearer, the above description and signature should be carefully compared with the bearer's present appearance and handwriting.

N.B.—ANY PERSON FINDING THIS CERTIFICATE IS REQUESTED TO FORWARD IT, IN AN UNSTAMPED ENVELOPE, TO L of C. AREA HEADQUARTERS.

Officer in Charge, Records N.S.W. L of C Area

Figure 6: Certificate of Discharge from the Army.

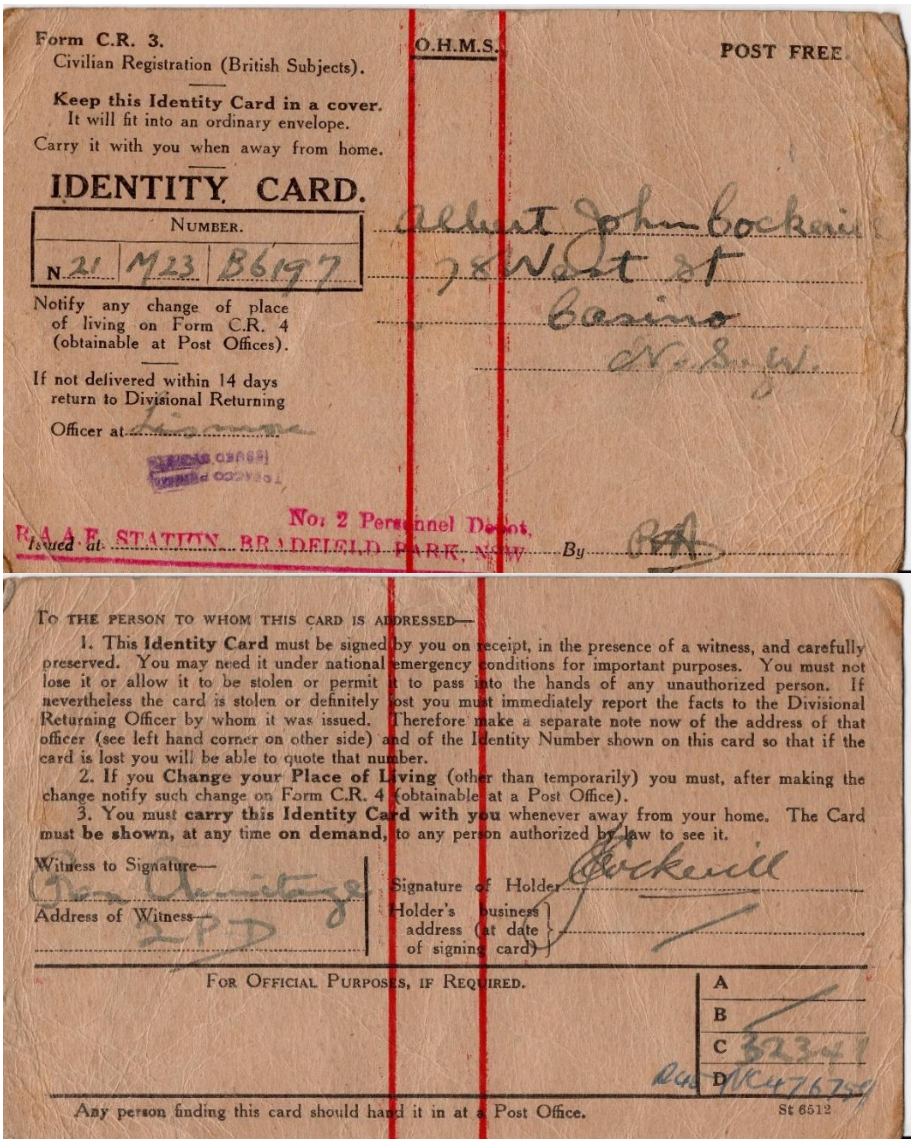
Into the Air Force – *Per ardua ad astra*

Prior to the war governments realised that airpower would play a strategic role in both defence and offence, consequently resources were directed to the building of fighters and bombers. While aircraft were produced, it was necessary to provide aircrews to fly and operate them. With the advent of war the British Government realised that it could not provide sufficient trained aircrews to meet the urgent demand for the defence of the UK and prosecution of the war against the enemy.

Discussions took place over a considerable period of time between representatives of the governments of the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand regarding the supply of trained aircrew personnel to the UK to successfully prosecute the conflict with Germany.

On 27th November, 1939 J. V. Fairbairn, Minister for Civil Aviation signed an agreement between the Australian and UK governments that committed Australia to the provision of an agreed number of trained aircrews under what was to be known as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). The other dominions agreed to participate in the scheme.

Establishment of the scheme was a major undertaking for the Australian Government requiring the construction of many airfields and associated infrastructure throughout the country. In addition qualified instructors had to be provided at all levels for pupils who progressed through the various levels of competency.



Form C.R. 3.
Civilian Registration (British Subjects).

Keep this Identity Card in a cover.
It will fit into an ordinary envelope.
Carry it with you when away from home.

IDENTITY CARD.

NUMBER.
N 21 M23 B6197

Albert John Lockwell
7 x W 2nd st
Casino
N.S.W.

Notify any change of place of living on Form C.R. 4 (obtainable at Post Offices).

If not delivered within 14 days return to Divisional Returning Officer at Lismore

Issued at R.A.A.F. STATION BRADFIELD PARK, N.S.W. No. 2 Personnel Depot. By

TO THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS CARD IS ADDRESSED—

1. This **Identity Card** must be signed by you on receipt, in the presence of a witness, and carefully preserved. You may need it under national emergency conditions for important purposes. You must not lose it or allow it to be stolen or permit it to pass into the hands of any unauthorized person. If nevertheless the card is stolen or definitely lost you must immediately report the facts to the Divisional Returning Officer by whom it was issued. Therefore make a separate note now of the address of that officer (see left hand corner on other side) and of the Identity Number shown on this card so that if the card is lost you will be able to quote that number.
2. If you **Change your Place of Living** (other than temporarily) you must, after making the change notify such change on Form C.R. 4 (obtainable at a Post Office).
3. You must **carry this Identity Card with you** whenever away from your home. The Card must **be shown, at any time on demand,** to any person authorized by law to see it.

Witness to Signature— [illegible]
Address of Witness— 2PD

Signature of Holder A. Lockwell
Holder's business address (at date of signing card)

FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES, IF REQUIRED.

A	
B	
C	32341
D	VR47675

Any person finding this card should hand it in at a Post Office. St 6512

Figure 7: Identity Card, front and rear (top and bottom panels respectively).

The Commonwealth Government now promulgated regulations requiring all citizens to carry an official Identity Card when away from their homes.

As requested, I reported to RAAF, HQ at Woolloomooloo on Saturday, 12th September, 1942 where the necessary formalities were completed to take me on strength as an aircrew trainee with the rank of Aircraftman Second Class (ACII). All aircrew trainees entered the service with this rank.

I was then required to report to 2 Initial Training School (2 ITS), Bradfield Park, located in the North Shore Sydney suburb of Lindfield, where I was assigned to aircrew trainee Flight 32H, 2 Squadron.

Figure 8: A happy looking group of Aircrew Trainees, 1942, Flight 32H,
No. 2 Initial Training School, Bradfield Park, Sydney, NSW.
Sgt. E.C. Harrod, Officer in Charge, seated in second row from the front in light coloured overalls. Bert is in the third row from the front, second from the right. Signed reverse side of photo can be seen in the Appendices (p.151).

Aircrew trainees were recognised by the white flash we wore in our forage caps. We were very proud of that distinguishing badge (Figure 9)!

Edward Bishop, the author of the book, *The Guinea Pig Club*, Transworld Publishers, London, 1963, page 36, makes the following interesting comment about being accepted for aircrew training:

> *So many years after the war it is forgotten how much acceptance as aircrew in the Air Force meant to young men ….One could tuck the white flash of aircrew into one's forage cap and walk out of one's cast environment, high low or middle, into the honoured, privileged, glamorised company of men where the dream of the eventual flying brevet completely discounted the actuarial expectation of a short, if gay, life.*

In a letter to my Mother dated Monday, 14th September, I made the following observations regarding my entry into the Air Force, which illustrated the contrast between the Air Force and the Army.

> *This station is a great place with all mod. cons. possible such as sewerage, hot and cold showers and water, electric light and a picture show. We even have crockery plates and the meals are pretty good.*
>
> *We have been issued with all of our uniform except shoes and kit bag but we have boots, which are very good, mine were so soft they didn't need any breaking in. My uniform fits very well.*
>
> *It's great being in here with all these chaps who have volunteered, so different from the militia where everybody is compulsorily trained and always grumbling.*
>
> *They tell us that the going is going to be pretty hard but I think it is going to be good all the same. I like it so far and am not a bit sorry that I am in it.*

Figure 9: Bert on 5th October, 1942 in Martin Place, Sydney, in Air Force uniform with white flash in cap signifying Aircrew Trainee (Pilot).

While the trainees came from all walks of life I noticed that there was a significant representation from the school teaching profession who were in their mid-twenties to early thirties. Many of them were subsequently classified as navigators.

Jim Dean, a chap who was in the same class at High School was in the same intake and same squadron but a different flight. He was classified as a pilot. Following training he participated in operational flying from which he returned safely.

I met Bill Barber, a cousin, who was pleased that he had been classified as a navigator. He was in an intake ahead of me. After completing his training he was posted to a Liberator bomber squadron based in the Darwin area. Unfortunately he was lost on 29th October, 1944 when his aircraft failed to return from a raid in the Timor area.

We aircrew trainees were kept very busy undergoing an intensive course of instruction and study in such subjects as mathematics, air navigation, magnetism and electricity, the principles of flight, airframes and engines, aircraft and ship recognition, morse code, law, discipline, administration and organisation, hygiene and sanitation. Outside the class-room there was physical training, unarmed combat, parade ground drill and marching.

The lecturer in the subjects law, discipline, administration and organisation gave special emphasis to the subjects of law and discipline advising us that if airmen committed various offences they could be charged under the relevant sections of the Air Force Act. He appeared to take fiendish delight in informing us that if a particular charge failed in relation to an offence, the airman could be charged under the catch-all Section 40 of the Air Force Act, which stated that the offence was "conduct prejudicial to the good order and discipline of His Majesty's Air Force".

There was little doubt that the majority of aircrew trainees wanted to be pilots. However, that was not possible.

I believe part of the procedure to categorise trainees for the various disciplines was their ability to pass a co-ordination test. The importance of that test was demonstrated by the fact that it took place within the first week of our entry to the school. The test consisted of sitting at basic aircraft controls similar to those in a Tiger Moth, that is, a joy stick and rudder pedals. These controls were linked to a small spotlight, which shone on a wall opposite to where one was seated and appropriate movement of the controls directed the spotlight to any desired position. In a darkened room the trainee was required to operate these controls and his spotlight in such a manner as to closely follow a similar spotlight hand-operated by a particularly beautiful Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) controller. While the controller would not divulge the results of the test, I thought that I had done quite well.

The final daunting act of categorisation into the various aircrew disciplines was the interview by a Categorisation Board of six officers seated at a long table in a large empty room about 30 feet from the door through which one entered. The trainee was required to march in smartly when his name was called, come to a halt about 10 feet from the table and stand strictly to attention during the interview. The interviewers posed a number of questions with particular emphasis on sport

especially football. Needless to say, many of the trainees gave appropriate answers, which they thought would impress and satisfy the Board.

Shortly after the interviews the results were announced on a Posting Parade and I was pleased to learn that I was categorised as a pilot. If one was categorised in a discipline other than the one desired there was no redress. Most accepted their fate philosophically. However, I remember one little fellow who had set his mind on being a pilot being categorised as a gunner. That decision caused him deep depression. His morale was at rock-bottom.

Following classification into the various disciplines trainees of the same classification were allotted to the same Flight, which meant that I joined the pilots only Flight 32 E, where the training was specific for pilots.

Progress to the next stage of aircrew training depended on passing exams in the various subjects of the curriculum, which meant that much of our spare time was devoted to study. It really was a high-powered business.

A special occasion during the course was when the intake was assembled in an auditorium to be addressed by Air Vice-Marshal Frederick R.W. Scherger, who gave us what could be called a "pep-talk" about patriotism, duty and our part in winning the war.

Any leave received during my Army career and during Air Force training at Bradfield Park was of short duration, such as 24 hours up to 72 hours. A leave of 72 hours enabled me to travel home to Casino, however, such a short leave allowed only one night at home for a round trip by train of 1,000 miles, generally travelling on the *Brisbane Express*. Sometimes the return trip had to be made by Troop Train, which was a very slow, tedious and uncomfortable journey.

The following poem is a succinct reminder of my many rail journeys along the North Coast of New South Wales before, during and after the war.

JOURNEY: THE NORTH COAST

Next thing, I wake up in a swaying bunk.
as though on board a clipper
clambering at sea,
and it's the train, that booms and cracks,
it tears the wind apart.
The man's gone who had the bunk below me.
I swing out, cover his bed and rattle up the sash –
there's sunlight rotating
off the drab carpet. And the water sways
solidly in its silver basin, so cold it joins
together through my hand.
I see from where I'm bowed
One of those bright crockery days
that belong to so much I remember.
The train's shadow, like a bird's,
flees on the blue and silver paddocks,

over fences that look split from stone,
and banks of fern,
a red clay bank, full of roots,
over a dark creek, with logs
and leaves suspended, and blackened tree trunks.
Down these slopes move,
as a nude descends a staircase,
slender white gum trees,
and now the country bursts open on the sea –
across a calico beach, unfurling;
strewn with flakes of light
that make the whole compartment whirl.
Shuttering shadows. I rise into the mirror
rested. I'll leave my hair
ruffled a bit that way—fold the pyjamas, stow the book
and wash bag. Everything done, press down
the latches into the case,
that for twelve months I've watched standing out
of a morning, above the wardrobe
in a furnished room.

Robert Gray

At Bradfield Park, if one was not required to do guard duty, one was able to enjoy weekend leave up to mid-night on the Sunday.

Figure 10: Bert and Joyce at the ball in the Sydney Town Hall, 17th October, 1942.

There is much truth in the old saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder". With the long periods away from home I missed my girlfriend Joyce greatly and I believed the feeling was

mutual as during my time at Bradfield Park Joyce decided to spend a fortnight during October-November, 1942 with her sister, Alyce and brother-in-law Dick McIntyre who lived in the Sydney suburb of Epping.

While Joyce was in Sydney a ball was held in the Sydney Town Hall. Joyce and I together with the McIntyres attended this function and had a very enjoyable evening at which our photos were taken.

Taking every opportunity during Joyce's stay in Sydney we enjoyed a wonderful time together. Deciding to become engaged, we went into the City on Saturday, 31st October, 1942 where I purchased an engagement ring of Joyce's choice. The engagement announcement was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday, 14th November, 1942.

16 THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, SATURDAY, NOV. 14, 1942

ENGAGEMENTS

COCKERILL—IMESON.—The Engagement is announced of Joyce Rosevear Imeson, younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Imeson, Casino, to Albert John Cockerill, R.A.A.F., only son of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Cockerill, Casino.

Figure 11: Engagement notice in The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14th November, 1942.*

Monday, 16th November, was the day Joyce was scheduled to leave Sydney. I had tea with her and the McIntyres at Epping then we caught a train to Hornsby and waited there for the *Brisbane Express* on which Joyce would travel home to Casino.

Waving goodbye as the train pulled out into the darkness I was overwhelmed by a feeling of utter loneliness, which persisted during the next day.

In order to publicise the opening of a new Austerity Loan the Government required that large military marches be conducted in the capital cities. So on 5th November, 1942 I together with other Air Force trainees from Bradfield Park participated in a large march through Sydney. We were joined by contingents from all the services and the forces of allied countries.

Air Force Day on 25th November, was celebrated with a large march through the city of over 4,000 Air Force personnel. The Governor took the salute at the Town Hall. I participated by marching with No. 2 Squadron. Unfortunately it rained during the whole of the march.

To Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS)

Successfully passing the final exams at ITS, I was promoted to Leading Aircraftman (LAC) and posted to No. 10 EFTS at Temora, NSW on No. 31 Pilots' Training Course with effect from 9th December, 1942.

Being confident of my destiny and never doubting my ability to learn to fly, it was with a great feeling of anticipation and excitement that I was now on the verge of achieving my ambition.

After an overnight trip by train from Sydney we arrived at Temora where we were picked up by Air Force trucks and taken to the flying school, which had modern facilities.

On the way to the RAAF station we passed a neatly burnt out area of grass leaving bare ground. It appears that several days before our arrival two Tiger Moths had collided in mid-air, crashed and burnt out with the loss of several lives. A sobering thought about flying for us trainees.

Apparently there had been a delay of several days in the training of the course ahead of us, which caused us to be housed in buildings at the local showground. During those days we were allotted to various duties, which familiarised us with the operations of the station. These duties included spud barbering at the kitchen, viewing operations in the parachute packing room, assisting with tarmac duties and helping where possible in the aircraft engine overhaul section and aircraft repair hangar. I will always remember the unique smell of the acetone-based dope used to dress and shrink the fabric covering the fuselage and wings of the Tiger Moth.

85
A17-685
DEFENCE SERIES No. 139 TIGER MOTH BIPLANES-BUILT IN AUSTRALIA IN HUNDREDS-ARE NUMBERED AMONGST THE MOST POPULAR ELEMENTARY TRAINERS USED IN ANY AIRFORCE
PHOTOGRAPH BY R.A.A.F. DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Figure 12: Tiger Moth biplanes. Photo: RAAF Directorate of Public Relations.

No. 10 EFTS was commanded by Wing Commander Hal R. Harding, a tall thin fatherly figure, who had a possessive pride in his station.

The Chief Flying Instructor was Squadron Leader Lionel E. Brain.

I was appointed to “A” Flight commanded by Flight Lieutenant W.D. Ephgrave.

On the door to the Flight Commander’s office there was a shield on which was emblazoned in mongrel Latin the motto, “Keepum Digitum Extractum”. Depicted above the motto was a hand with fingers clenched except the index finger, which was extended pointing to and just below a ring.

My flying instructor was Sergeant Cyril F. Plisch, who was not a very talkative person but I thought he was a good instructor and good to get along with.

Sgt. Plisch and a trainee pilot were killed when their Tiger Moth crashed on 10th March, 1943.

Very early in the course we were given strict instructions not to "shoot up" farm homesteads where we may have a girlfriend or friends. Apart from a number of other reasons, the main one was that it was an extremely dangerous practice because one may collide with an unforseen obstacle, or while showing off and waving to one's girlfriend, the aircraft might stall and go into a spin from which it would be impossible to recover resulting in a crash and possible death.

To achieve advancement to EFTS was morale boosting and commendable, however, the challenge of learning to fly was a test for every trainee. Everyone was keen to succeed no matter what the cost. Unfortunately for a variety of reasons about 30% failed to meet the requirements and were scrubbed from the course, which was devastating on their morale. I remember commiserating with John English after he was scrubbed. He had been at High School with me.

I believe we were all under continual assessment of how we applied ourselves to the various aspects of training and duties so I made sure that I acquitted myself with enthusiasm and to the best of my ability.

The Air Force was a popular service and many men applied to join with the objective of training for aircrew so there was a large waiting list, consequently those responsible for training could be very discerning regarding those who would progress and those who would not. This situation put all trainees under continual pressure.

While on the station our standard uniform was blue overalls, which were called "goon skins".

It was summertime with very hot dry weather. As "Sprog" trainees we weren't allowed to fly during the afternoons because of the strong air turbulence. So it was early morning starts, rising at 3:45 a.m. and after breakfast we were taken to the satellite airfield to start flying by 6:00 a.m. before the thermals arrived. There were days when the temperature reached 114ºF (45.5ºC) and on a couple of occasions we experienced severe dust storms.

The prevailing winds were westerlies, which were often very strong. I remember an occasion during an afternoon when a Tiger Moth flying at about 1,000 feet in the circuit area of the main airfield was unable to make any progress at all for several minutes due to the very strong westerly headwind.

While living and flying in the hot conditions, it was an enticing prospect to look down from the air and see the blue olympic-size swimming pool near the hospital. On several occasions we took advantage of the opportunity to experience the luxury of swimming in the pool.

We were kept very busy with flying training during the morning and lectures in the afternoon. Many trainees found it difficult to remain awake during the lecture immediately after lunch in the hot weather. It made no difference to the instructors who carried on with their lectures without comment.

About halfway through the course after gaining sufficient flying experience we were allowed to fly during the afternoons.

When flying we were required to have a parachute with us. On the station the Parachute Section occupied a hut in which there were long tables on which WAAAF personnel laid out the parachutes to their full length before folding them in the correct manner, which was vitally important so that when the rip-cord was pulled the parachute would open quickly in the desired manner.

After tea in the evenings there were lessons in receiving and transmitting morse code. We were required to reach a standard of receiving and writing down the code at the rate of 10 words per minute and send at least the same rate. It was however, much easier to send than receive.

There was an enthusiastic signals sergeant at Temora, who coached us well and I reached a standard where I was able to receive at the rate of 20 words per minute and send at the rate of 40 words per minute.

My first experience of flying was on 14th December, 1942 when Warrant Officer (W/O) Murray, an instructor took me up for a familiarisation flight of 20 minutes duration at a height of 1,000 feet. We circled the airfield several times while the instructor pointed out the various landmarks in the area. I found the flight a very enjoyable experience.

We were now due for leave. We were granted leave of four days but owing to the great distance to travel and train timetables, it only allowed me one night at home. The return trip from Casino to Sydney was by a slow troop train, which arrived in Sydney at 1:00 p.m. about five hours after the *Brisbane Express*. From my experience troop trains had a very low priority in the railway system.

Ron Nowlan from Casino, who I knew was also returning to Temora. Ron was in the ground staff. On arrival in Sydney we went to Air Force House at 97 Goulburn Street, where we had a shower and shave. We then went to *St. Andrew's Hut* for lunch because the meals there were better than at Air Force House. After lunch I wrote a letter to Joyce and Ron had a sleep. In the evening we attended a good concert at the *Tivoli Theatre* before boarding the train to Temora, which left at 11:25 p.m.

On arrival at Temora we experienced an extremely hot day.

The next morning I was scheduled to be the first up at 5:30 a.m. for an hour's flying with my instructor.

For every aspiring pilot the most important milestone was to fly solo, which I did on 31st December, 1942. This meant taking off, doing a circuit of the airfield and landing safely. A flight time of 10 minutes. A major achievement that boded well for my future.

Flying instruction covered all aspects of flying associated with the Tiger Moth. After mastering these techniques to the satisfaction of the instructor we were required to practise solo the various exercises. Some of the exercises were circuits and landings, often referred to as circuits and bumps, and other exercises including: flying straight and level, turns (during which it was necessary to maintain the hands on the turn and bank indicators in the correct positions), climbing

turns, steep turns, climbing and diving, rolls and slow rolls, looping the loop, sideslips, spins and recovery, stalls and recovery, cross-country flights and instrument flying (with an instructor), night flying both dual and solo.

On 21st January, 1943 I did a dual, that is, with an instructor, cross-country flight to Upper Tarcutta, then to Cootamundra where we landed then returned to Temora. During the leg from Cootamundra to Temora I was required to fly under the hood, on instruments only. When the instructor told me to lift the hood, there was Temora straight ahead, which gave me much satisfaction and demonstrated that my instrument flying was very good.

On 26th January, I did a solo cross-country flight to Young then to Cootamundra where I was required to land then return to Temora.

Near the end of the course we underwent flying tests, which were conducted by instructors other than our own. I was successful in these tests. I was also successful in the theory examinations.

What we thought was an amusing incident occurred one day when one of my instructor's pupils got lost and ended up about 40 miles away from the station. He had taken off on a solo flight and climbed above a low layer of cloud. Sometime later on descending below the cloud he didn't know where he was. After flying around for about an hour he saw a landing ground near a little township and landed there. The whole population turned out to see him. There were kids everywhere and he had a job trying to keep them off the plane, then they wanted him to sign their autograph books. Someone brought a big tray full of cakes and tea and treated him like a hero. Generous country people! An Air Force rescue team brought the pupil back to the station and an instructor flew the plane back.

Not all flying instruction was airborne as we were soon required to undergo instruction in the Link Trainer, which was a flight simulator designed for flying on instruments only.

All trainees were required to undertake 20 lessons amounting to at least 10 hours on this machine. My course of instruction was from 11th January to 3rd February, 1943.

The Link was a pneumatically operated machine using a system of bellows. It simulated flight to a certain extent but was unforgiving of the smallest error in maintaining correct flying attitude. If one deviated from correct flying attitude the machine immediately went into a spin, which required the appropriate correction to regain control.

The cockpit in the Link was fitted with a control column and pedals and the standard British aircraft instrument flying panel.

The Link was an excellent means of training for flying on instruments only, as when the hood was lowered over the pilot it was impossible to see outside the cockpit. All exercises were done on instruments.

The courses flown by the pilot in the Link were reproduced in ink on paper by a repeater mechanism located on a nearby table. A system of cables connected the Link to the repeater mechanism.

As one became more adept at operating the Link the officer in charge would specify that the trainee fly navigational courses that would reproduce block letters on the print-out such as the capital letter H or E or something else as equally difficult during which he would throw in wind shifts in speed and direction. The aim was to take into account all of these problems and end up at the same point from which one started.

Flying exercises, lectures, Link Trainer exercises, morse code practice after tea and study kept us very busy with little time for recreational activities. Occasionally we took the opportunity to attend the local picture theatre to see the movies. Sometimes by way of a change we went into town for dinner at the *Royal Hotel* where we could have a lovely four course meal for three shillings and sixpence.

Nearing the end of the course and after completing some exercises with my instructor flying at a height of 3,000 feet, he took control of the aircraft and dived down to a paddock leveling out a few feet above the ground at high speed, heading for a high windbreak of gum trees at the far end. At the last moment he pulled the control column back and the aircraft climbed steeply to about 500 feet. Near the stalling point he sideslipped the aircraft to the left losing about 200 feet of height, leveling out he headed back to the airfield. A thrilling example of clever precision flying but with no room for error of judgment or aircraft malfunction.

He gave no explanation for this extraordinary performance and I didn't think it was in my province to question him.

I have often wondered about the reason for this demonstration, raising the following questions: Did all of his pupils experience this exhibition? Was he celebrating the completion of another course and the successful training of another pilot? Was it to relieve the monotony of instructing? Being a man of quiet disposition who daily practised careful flying and instruction, was it meant to demonstrate that there was another side to his character, which had been submerged due to his role as an instructor?

Night flying exercises on Thursday, 4th February, 1943 completed the flying course and to celebrate the occasion a Flight Dinner was held on the Friday.

On completion of the course I had achieved a total of 63 hours flying experience comprising:

Dual	Day 37:10	Night 2:40	Total 39:50
Solo	Day 22:50	Night 0:20	Total 23:10

On the Sunday a special luncheon was held to mark the successful conclusion of the course for those who had graduated. The Commanding Officer addressed us and as a personal gesture each trainee was issued with a pamphlet containing a treatise on bravery personally signed by the Commanding Officer (see Appendix, p.152).

The main course of the luncheon comprised cold roast lamb and salad. It was unfortunate that the occasion was marred by the presence of maggots crawling over the cold meat on the plates.

My instructor had recommended me for service flying training on single engine aircraft so it was with a great deal of anticipation that we waited for our postings to Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS). We received our postings late on the Monday afternoon. I was posted to No. 1 SFTS located at Point Cook in Victoria, not far from Melbourne. This meant that I would be training in the twin engine Airspeed Oxford aircraft imported from the UK.

V3354
DEFENCE SERIES No. 141
AIRSPEED "OXFORD" MONOPLANES, USED FOR TWIN-ENGINED TRAINING, REPRODUCE ACCURATELY THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAST HEAVY BOMBERS WHICH THE TRAINEES WILL FLY ON ACTIVE SERVICE.
PHOTOGRAPH BY R.A.A.F. DIRECTORATE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Figure 13: Airspeed Oxford monoplane. Photo: RAAF Directorate of Public Relations.

The war situation was gradually changing from one of defence requiring fighter pilots to one requiring bomber crews to attack the enemy in his own country.

I had no objection to training on multi-engine aircraft.

It was Winston Churchill who said, "The fighters are our salvation but the bombers alone provide the means of victory".

I was required to report to Point Cook by 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, 13th February, 1943.

Owing to difficulties associated with rail transport it was impossible to go home.

Leaving Temora on the Wednesday evening gave me a day in Sydney and the opportunity to visit some relatives and by chance to meet and chat for a few minutes in a city street with my pretty cousin, Pattie Barber. During the Friday afternoon some of us went ice skating at the *Glaciarium* after which we had a very nice meal at the popular Cahill's Restaurant.

We boarded the *Melbourne Express* at 8:00 p.m. and arrived at Albury early next morning where we had to change trains because of the difference in rail gauges. NSW operated on a rail gauge, often referred to as the standard gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches, whereas the Victorian railway system operated on the broad gauge of 5 feet 4 inches. This situation was brought about by the shortsightedness and folly of state politicians before federation.

Figure 14: No. 3 Squadron, No. 31 Pilots' Course 1943, No. 1 SFTS Point Cook.

Back Row: Col Noble, Mac Carthy, A.J. (Bert) Cockerill, Bill Kelly, Ross Roberts, Wall Baird, Bill Boutcher, Henry Friend, Stan Reeve, Payne*, Mike Brady*, Alf Raymant**

Third Row: Harry Butler, Jim Hosking, Jim Mapstone, George Parry, Warren Digby, Roy Ayrton, Jack Fletcher*, Bill Waterton, Jack Thompson*, Alan Moore, Frank Walters*

Second Row: Ross Leake, Alex Rudling, Don Ford, MacDonald, Ted Chamberlain*, Norman Judge, Joe Temple, Bill Woods, George Edwards, Young**

Front Row: Bob Vickers, Jack Brown, Harry Levy, Peter Paterson (Course Corporal)*
*(participants marked * didn't pass course)*

Australia's most modern and luxurious train, the *Spirit of Progress* was also at the station and due to leave for Melbourne before our Second Division of the *Melbourne Express*.

While walking along the platform we saw former Prime Minister and then leader of the Opposition, Mr. R.G. Menzies, having breakfast in the dining car of the *Spirit of Progress*.

On arrival in Melbourne we were picked up by Air Force tenders and transported to Point Cook, arriving there at about 3:00 p.m. This station had been established for many years and its size was impressive. The station held a prestigious position in the history of the Air Force being the earliest base of the RAAF and the location of No. 1 SFTS.

The station was located southwest of Melbourne on a large expanse of flat land a few feet above sea level. Its boundary on one side was part of the shoreline of Port Phillip Bay. It was often very hot in summer and very cold in winter being exposed to southerly winds, which swept across the Bay. We were housed in corrugated galvanised iron huts.

It soon became evident that the atmosphere at this station was very different to that at Temora. Discipline appeared to be harsher with an uncompromising attitude by those in authority. In my opinion this attitude was unnecessary in view of the fact that we were all well-educated volunteers and had qualified to reach this stage in our training and were enthusiastic about gaining our "Wings".

Figure 15: Ted Lawson in the cockpit of a Tiger Moth at Western Junction EFTS, Tasmania.

Trainees in No. 31 Pilots' Course came from various Elementary Flying Training Schools including the EFTS at Western Junction near Launceston in Tasmania, where my mate Ted Lawson had done his training.

Ted was the son of a Presbyterian parson. He was born at Creswick, Victoria, and was about a year older than I. Ted and I often went on leave together and had great times at Torquay, Lorne and Melbourne. Ted had two sisters with whom we often spent time while on leave.

On our first leave in Melbourne Ted thought my education should be broadened by taking me to the popular *Young and Jackson's* pub on the corner of Swanston Street and Flinders Street, a place where a great cross-section of humanity met and enjoyed a convivial drink. While enjoying a couple of beers in the main bar we were able to view the famous life-size nude painting of Chloe in a massive frame. This painting has helped to cement its position as a pub of note.

Young and Jackson's sits on a block purchased by John Batman, the founder of Melbourne, at the first land sales.

We were allowed one day off a week and two days every month and every Wednesday night until 1:00 a.m. Thursday.

Figure 16: Bert, Ted and friend on weekend leave at Lorne, Victoria.

On completion of the course Ted was posted to the UK and reached the rank of Flight Lieutenant flying on operations with 207 RAF Squadron, 5 Group, located at Spilsby, Lincolnshire. On 2nd March, 1945, when flying a Lancaster Mk. III, ME 473 on a night, fighter affiliation exercise he and his crew and a LAC authorised passenger were killed at 01:18 in a mid-air collision with another Lancaster Mk. III, No. 572 of 57 RAF Squadron, from RAF Station, East Kirkby. After taking off at 00:21 nothing more was heard until 03:00 when a second 207 Squadron aircraft reported seeing an aircraft on fire. The aircraft crashed at Fen Farm, Ruskington, Lincolnshire about 15 miles southeast of Lincoln and approximately 20 miles southwest of Spilsby. Ted, aged 22, had completed 22 ops. So came to an end Ted's ambition to start an airline after the war. Ted and his crew members are buried in the War Cemetery section of the Cambridge Cemetery, which Joyce and I visited in 1993.

For a fortnight after our arrival at Point Cook we attended lectures and engaged in physical training. The delay in starting flying instruction was due to the fact that some adjustments were being made to all the Airspeed Oxford planes.

Intensive instruction in flying the Airspeed Oxford in daylight started on 1st March, 1943. My flying instructor was Flying Officer Eric Beer, a short red-haired fellow with whom I got on very well. F/O Beer was later posted to the Papua New Guinea war theatre where he was killed in an aircraft accident on 11th September, 1945 while serving with 33 RAAF Squadron.

To our north the threat of the Japanese advance was increasing resulting in the Battle of the Bismark Sea, which began on 2nd March, 1943. Twelve Japanese ships carrying reinforcements to New Guinea were sunk by Allied planes killing nearly 4,000. The success of this battle

demonstrated the advantage of superior air power and was significant in reducing the threat of invasion by the Japanese.

Daylight flying instruction was carried out at satellite airfields and we trainees were taken there by Air Force tender driven by a WAAAF driver. The tender was a truck in the back of which was bench seating. A canvas canopy provided protection from the weather. During transit to the airfield it was not uncommon for the trainees to engage in singing. Harry Butler, a weedy little fellow, generally led us in the loud singing as he had a fund of bawdy songs, which he had picked up while serving with No. 10 RAAF Sunderland Squadron in England. I believe he had trained as a fitter and occasionally flown as a gunner on the Sunderlands. He had remustered to train as a pilot.

While the war situation was serious in both the Pacific and European theatres there was no problem with morale in our group members who were making progress with the flying.

My night flying experience commenced on 24th March, when at 2:30 a.m. I was given 1½ hours instruction by F/O Beer using the Point Cook aerodrome. The next night I received further instruction in night flying and after a test by another instructor was sent off on my own.

The instructors appeared to be extremely concerned about the dangers of night flying. They impressed on us that 19 Oxford aircraft had been lost and that they didn't want to lose any more. Great emphasis was placed on the fact that we had to have the utmost faith in our instruments and fly the aircraft accordingly.

The prevailing wind was across the Bay, which meant that we used the runway that took us out over the water and if anything went wrong we would end up in the water with little chance of survival. With these warnings ringing in my ears I observed explicitly the instructions and safely completed my solo night flying flight.

Being posted to SFTS did not release one from the possibility of being scrubbed from the course. Out of the six trainees assigned to my instructor five were scrubbed. I was the only one to complete the course so I believe my flying ability must have been above average. I certainly enjoyed flying and I found the Airspeed Oxford a lovely aircraft to fly. It didn't appear to have any vices.

It has been reported that approximately 18% of trainees were scrubbed at SFTS.

It was sad to see young enthusiastic fellows being scrubbed after progressing to this stage in their training. For the fellows concerned it was particularly devastating.

To ensure one's progress it was particularly important to guard one's behaviour and reputation and to obey all instructions so that those in authority had no reason to terminate one's course.

I recall an occasion when if I had objected my future progress would in all probability have been put in jeopardy. I, together with other trainees and instructors were at the Werribee satellite airfield where the instructors were skylarking and for some reason they had ganged up on my instructor and were giving him a hard time. One of the instructors had grabbed my instructor's

peaked cap and placed it on top of the flag-pole. There was no way that my instructor would climb the flag-pole to retrieve his cap when there were trainees standing around watching what was going on so my instructor instructed me to get his cap. Realising the situation in which I was placed I immediately shinnied up the pole and got the cap and returned it to him, which pleased him, after which order was restored.

Another occasion, which gave me considerable concern and inconvenience was when my Auntie Sue visited Melbourne and sent me a telegram on a Friday advising that she was staying at the *Menzies Hotel* in Prahran and would like to see me on the Saturday evening. Auntie Sue's wish was my command! My father and Sue were brother and sister and very good friends. Sue and her family had on several occasions driven up from Sydney, where she lived, to visit us while we lived on the farm and in town. She had reared a family of three girls and divorced her husband, Will Barber, and was now married to Captain John Ross of the Merchant Marine, who was due to call at Melbourne in his ship, which was the reason for Sue's visit.

My difficulties were that I was not due for leave on that weekend, consequently I had put my uniform in for dry cleaning. What to do? My mate Ted Lawson agreed to lend me his uniform but he was about two inches taller than I, so I had to hitch the trousers up as far as possible and hope for the best with the long-sleeved jacket. He also agreed to lend me his leave pass and identity card as he was allowed on leave that weekend.

Those going on leave were taken by bus to the city, however before boarding the bus the sergeant in charge of our course was stationed near the bus door checking leave passes and ID cards. As I approached him I checked Ted's Air Force number in case I was asked for it and sure enough he asked me what it was. I reeled off the first three numbers and after some hesitation recalled the last three after which he allowed me on the bus but I felt certain that he knew that I was not Ted Lawson.

I made my way to the *Menzies Hotel* where Sue was waiting. I explained to her my difficulties and the ill-fitting uniform, which she had noted. After chatting for a couple of hours and a cup of tea I bade farewell and returned to the station.

I don't believe there was any way that Sue could have appreciated my difficulties arising from her invitation.

As can be appreciated this escapade could have had serious consequences for me if I had been picked up by the Air Force Police, who patrolled the city or if I had met with an accident. My Air Force career would have been in serious jeopardy. As luck would have it I had answered her call without incident and family friendship had been maintained.

A matter, which gained a certain amount of notoriety during training at Point Cook was the story about Maurie Falstein, a member of an earlier course. Because he was a former Labor Party politician in the NSW parliament, his tenure there was accompanied by a considerable amount of publicity; the story went around that he was instrumental in gaining many concessions for his course that were not made available to members of following courses.

Situated close to Melbourne and its attractions and with little chance of being posted to front line operations the comfortably ensconced hierarchy with its puffed-up sense of importance must have found it extremely galling to have a trainee questioning their rules and regulations and practices. Possibly fearing political repercussions, they were prepared to grant some concessions but only to his course.

Notwithstanding that Falstein had been educated at Sydney Grammar School and the University of Sydney and admitted to the Bar as a Barrister, in view of his stirring, these qualifications did not enhance his Air Force career opportunities at that time. There would be no doubt that the hierarchy would win in the end. I believe that on graduation he was not granted a commission, receiving the non-commissioned officer rank of sergeant. However, later in his Air Force career he did receive a commission.

For flying training we were placed in the Intermediate Training Squadron (ITS). The flying was based on the satellite airfield at Werribee, which was located near the large sewage farm where Melbourne's effluent was treated. There was an unpleasant smell associated with this farm and I remember when night flying at a height of 5,000 feet over the area the smell even at that height confirmed my location.

Beef cattle were grazed on the lush pastures of the sewage farm where they did very well. Years later I heard that these cattle suffered from an infection called "beef measle", which was supposed to be harmless to human beings.

During our time in the ITS we flew with an instructor or solo until we passed the Wings Test. After passing the Wings Test we entered the Advanced Training Squadron (ATS) where much of our flying was done with other trainees. On these flights each trainee shared the time equally carrying out the various exercises. Instructors only flew with us on occasions to instruct us in specific operations. The ATS was based on the satellite airfield at Little River.

The transition from Intermediate to Advanced Training Squadron was quite marked. There was a significant change in attitude and in the training ethos. It was as though we had suddenly reached responsible adulthood and were now competent flyers making our own decisions.

The flying program for both squadrons was intense with flying almost daily and sometimes several times during the day.

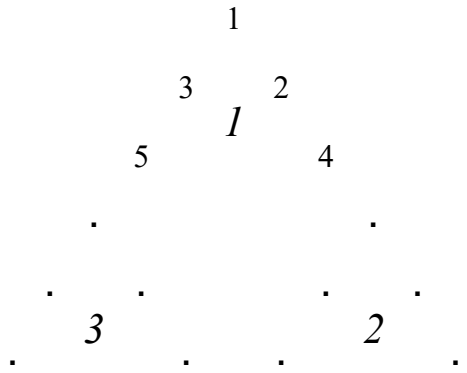
Among the many flying exercises there was low-level bombing, which I found interesting and achieved very good results. Ten pound white-painted practice bombs were used in these exercises.

At a certain stage in our training we were required to do a low-level cross-country flight with an instructor. Everyone looked forward to this exciting event flying as close as possible to the contour of the land. At low-level there was a great sense of speed and avoiding obstacles added to the thrill. "Speed is the ecstasy of modern man!"

With my instructor in the 2nd pilot's seat, I took off at 8:20 a.m. on 13th April, 1943 for my low-level cross-country flight. The flight was progressing well without comment from my instructor when suddenly on coming over a ridge a gorge appeared straight ahead over which power lines were stretched. I immediately assessed that it was possible to fly under the power lines but with my instructor sitting beside me I thought better of it and gently pulled back the control column and passed smoothly over them and resumed the low-level altitude.

Returning to base after an hour and twenty minutes, I asked my instructor, "How was the flight?" His only reply was, "It was low enough!" I believe he enjoyed the flight as much as I did.

On Friday, 16th April, a big War Loan money raising rally was staged in Melbourne. No. 1 SFTS was requested to support the rally with a fly-past over the city so we trainees and our instructors in the ITS obliged the authorities and did the fly-past with 15 Airspeed Oxfords in three "V" vic formations arranged as follows:



A diagram of the "V" formation.
I was in the first flight, in aircraft number 4.

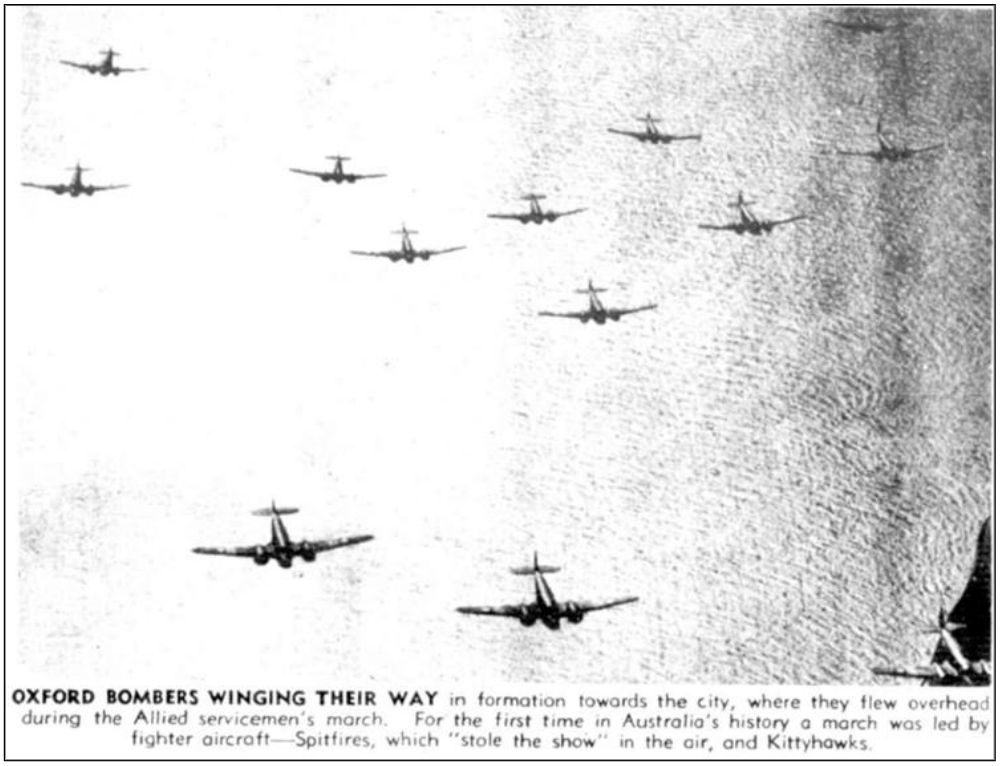
Other aircraft in the fly-past were seven Spitfires, two Kittyhawks and one Beaufighter: Quite an impressive demonstration.

The photo in Figure 17 appeared in the news. I was in the aircraft in the lower left-hand corner.

During the whole of the flying program we were required to do 16 hours instrument flying exercises in the Link Trainer.

On 20th April, I successfully completed the Wings Test when I did a 30 minute flight with Flight Lieutenant Shanahan. Two days later I successfully completed an instrument flying test conducted by F/Lt. Maloney. These tests were followed by examinations in ground subjects, which I passed following which I progressed to the Advanced Training Squadron.

Whilst at Point Cook we underwent a dental check. On the advice of the dentist my wisdom teeth were extracted and as he was dissatisfied with the fillings in my lower jaw molars he refilled all of them, which was an unpleasant experience. It also meant that I was a regular patient over several weeks during the course in the ATS.



OXFORD BOMBERS WINGING THEIR WAY in formation towards the city, where they flew overhead during the Allied servicemen's march. For the first time in Australia's history a march was led by fighter aircraft—Spitfires, which "stole the show" in the air, and Kittyhawks.

Figure 17: The Australasian*, 24th April, 1943, aircraft and Allied Troops participate in Loan Parade.*

One of the ground instructors said that he would be attending the horse races at Mentone on the Saturday and anyone wishing to accompany him would be welcome to do so. Three or four of us accepted his invitation and enjoyed a pleasant afternoon watching the thoroughbred races. Sometime after the war the Mentone race course ceased to operate.

A Radio Australia transmitter was located in the district and one day a Signals Officer took us to the transmitter to view the equipment, which was housed in a building near the radio towers.

A number of Lockheed P-38 Lightning aircraft were based at the nearby Laverton aerodrome. On a number of occasions I found it interesting to watch skip-bombing exercises being carried out by one of these planes at Point Cook. The aircraft was put into a dive and at a critical moment a bomb was released, which hit the water and bounced up onto the shore, simulating an attack on an enemy warship.

Point Cook had several large aircraft hangars and on a visit to one of these one day I was interested to see two aircraft that I had not previously seen. One was the classic biplane fighter, the Hawker Demon with its sharp-pointed propeller boss and streamlined fuselage. The engine area and fuselage back as far as the pilot's cockpit was sheathed in polished aluminium with the rest of the aircraft covered in fabric and painted in the same colour. It was indeed a striking looking aircraft. The other machine was an amphibian, the Seagull V. No Doubt it was effective for the purpose for which it was designed but could not be classed as an attractive looking aircraft.

Many places in Melbourne had been prepared with all the necessary facilities to cater for service people when on leave. Such a place was the beautiful Malvern Town Hall building where bed

and breakfast accommodation could be had for the cost of one shilling and sixpence. I stayed there on several occasions. Another popular place for service people was the *Dug Out*, which had a café, reading and writing rooms, a luggage room, showers and a dance floor.

While on leave in Melbourne during the first weekend in May I met Bill Scroup and Harold Beck from the home town. Bill was training as a fitter in the Air Force at Ascot Vale and Harold was training as a wireless operator in the Navy at Flinders Naval Base. Harold and I went to a concert in the Melbourne Town Hall on the Sunday night, which was a very good show. It was good to meet up with these fellows from Casino.

At this time, significant war news came, when the Battle of North Africa ended on 13th May, 1943 with the German surrender of Cape Bon in Tunisia.

Figure 18: Bert being invested with the Pilot's Wings Flying Badge.
Graduation Day Wings Parade, Point Cook, 16th June, 1943.

Nearing the end of the course in the ATS all of us were required to undergo a final flying test with a senior instructor. I successfully completed this test on 25th May, with Flight Lieutenant (F/Lt.) Marks, a rotund avuncular type of fellow. My flying in the ATS concluded on 14th June.

All the training and all the effort came to fruition on 16th June, 1943 when the successful members of 31 Pilots' Course attended the great occasion of the Wings Parade when we were invested with the Pilot's Wings Flying Badge. A great achievement and a proud moment in our lives. I was 19 and one of the younger graduates.

I believe the press had been invited to attend the ceremony and it was reported in the Melbourne newspapers.

WINGS PARADE FOR YOUNG PILOTS

Figure 19: The Sun, *Thursday, 17th June, 1943. "Wings Parade for Young Pilots".*
"SCENE AT THE PASSING-OUT CEREMONY at a service flying training school somewhere in Victoria yesterday. Group Captain R.S. Brown is seen presenting wings to fledgling pilots, who will be posted to operational squadrons."
Bert is near the intersection of the rows.

Commissioning

On graduating as a pilot I was promoted to the rank of sergeant.

In our course at Point Cook we were placed in one of several squadrons referred to as squads. I was in No. 3 Squad, which started off with 36 trainees of which 11 were scrubbed, amounting to a failure rate of 30.5%.

I have no intention of bragging but I was confident that I was a very competent pilot and the fact that I was the only trainee not scrubbed by my instructor reinforced that belief. During the period that I was in the ATS I flew with many other trainees none of whom were better or more competent that I was.

I now make some comment on promotion with the Air Force.

I find it hard to understand why my Flying Instructor at EFTS, Sgt. Plisch, who had been instructing for a considerable period of time had not been promoted to commissioned officer rank. At the time of his death in March, 1943 he was still only a sergeant.

My familiarisation flight at EFTS was done with an instructor with the rank of warrant officer. Apart from him and my instructor all the other instructors with whom I flew were commissioned officers.

The job of Flying Instructor was difficult, demanding and dangerous and those who served in that capacity should have been entitled to commissioned rank.

I believe the "powers-that-be" have a lot to answer for in not recognising the worth of Sgt. Plisch and other NCOs, who were experienced instructors doing the same work as commissioned officers without the recognition and recompense of commissioned rank, which they deserved.

Information has been published that the British Government requested that approximately 30% of graduating pilots under the EATS be commissioned to provide sufficient commissioned officers to fill vacancies as they occurred through operational losses. The British Government advised that those who had attended private schools would most likely fulfil the requirements of officers and *gentlemen*. It is interesting to note the statement by Max Hastings on page 215 of his book *Bomber Command* that:

> *The Air Ministry never lost its conviction that gentlemen made the best aircrew, and a remarkable staff memorandum of late 1942 expressed concern about the growing proportion of Colonials in Bomber Command and suggested: 'There are indications in a number of directions that we are not getting a reasonable percentage of young men of the middle and upper classes, who are the backbone of this country, when they leave the public schools.'*

This clearly illustrates the class distinction attitude of the pompous stuffed-shirts in the Air Ministry. What a way to conduct a war? Notwithstanding this supercilious attitude the British government desperately sought the assistance of thousands of trained air crew from the Commonwealth countries under the EATS. These air crew made a significant contribution to the success of Bomber Command and winning the war. As the war progressed with ever-mounting losses, it became necessary to promote to commissioned rank NCO pilots, who had not attended private schools. These officers were second-to-none!

It is obvious that the Australian Government was an obsequious "forelock tugger" to the British Government in this matter, whereas the Canadian Government had the intestinal fortitude to resist the demands of the British Government and insisted that all pilots, navigators and bomb-aimers in the Royal Canadian Air Force be commissioned officers. This discrimination was not tolerated in the United States Air Force.

I have been told that on those occasions when a British or British Commonwealth NCO pilot was diverted from his home base and had to make an emergency landing at a US Air Force base,

he was automatically invited to attend their commissioned officers' mess, which clearly demonstrated their attitude to the position of pilot and captain of aircraft.

There were countless examples where pilots on successfully completing their course by qualifying for their "Wings" were promoted to the rank of sergeant while fellow trainees received commissioned rank. It was virtually assured that if a trainee had attended a private school he would irrespective of his competence and ability receive a commission on completion of the course.

This mean-spirited, penny-pinching, class distinction policy practised by those in command had its effects throughout the RAAF.

Many pilots as captains of aircraft with crews of seven or more completed tours of operations in Bomber Command and elsewhere with the rank of flight sergeant while other members of their crews were commissioned officers – some with very high rank. These NCO pilots were doing the same job, in the same situation as the commissioned officer pilots, facing the same dangers and risks and doing their job without the recognition and remuneration to which they were justly entitled.

Those commissioned at the time of gaining their "Wings" reaped significant advantages such as more rapid advancement to higher rank, higher pay, higher status, better messing, better living quarters and conditions, better uniforms, the opportunity to become officers in charge of flights and squadrons and further advancement to high rank and better conditions in the event of being captured and becoming a prisoner of war (POW). Officers travelled First Class by rail while NCOs travelled Second Class. In the UK it was First Class and Third Class with NCOs in Third Class.

The advantage of being a commissioned officer on becoming a POW was succinctly stated by RAF Wing Commander Edward Howell, OBE, DFC, a former POW, in his book *Escape to Live*:

> *As prisoners, officers were paid and other ranks were not. The theory was that other ranks would earn money by working, which officers were not allowed to do. But in prisoner-of-war hospitals the men could not work and therefore received no pay. They could only purchase from the canteen if they sold their belongings or were given money by their officers. It was a bad system.*

An interesting situation arose during my operational time at 462 RAAF Squadron, which demonstrated the importance of ability and experience rather than rank.

The US 8th Air Force engaged in daylight operations and attacked targets while flying in formation. This concentrated the effects of the bombing while offering the greatest defence against attack by German fighter aircraft.

Following the decision by Bomber Command to engage in daylight attacks on German targets, it was decided by those in command that we should emulate the Americans and adopt formation flying. The first formation flying attack by 462 Squadron was on 30th September, 1944 on the

oil refinery at Bottrop in the Ruhr. As the pilot and crew who had completed the most operations at that time, I and my crew were selected to lead the squadron in formation flying on this operation. My rank was flight sergeant and the members of my crew were either flight sergeants or sergeants.

The following quote from the book *A Last Call of Empire* by John McCarthy verifies the situation regarding commissioning:

> *It is true, however, that certain anomalies did exist in the commissioning system and it was the Canadians who forced a re-evaluation of it. The charge of neglect leveled by some against the RAAF contained some truth. When the Empire Air Training Scheme was renegotiated at Ottawa in May, 1942, there was no Australian support for a Canadian proposal that all pilots, navigators and bomb-aimers should be commissioned and fifty per cent of all wireless operator-air gunners. Nor was there support for the Canadian view that NCO rank was "not compatible with the responsibility imposed in commanding large and expensive aircraft". All Australia did was to follow a British line that the existing percentage limits on commissioning be lifted. Even so it took Australia until 31st March, 1943 to get air ministry to sign an agreement putting this policy into effect.*
> *In the mean time, Canada had acted, securing in May, 1942 the right to commission "All pilots, observers, navigators and air bombers who were considered suitable according to the standards of the Government of Canada."*
> *Moreover, Canada claimed the right to commission up to twenty per cent of wireless operator-air gunners and straight air gunners.*

Promotion to commissioned rank was an important matter for us NCOs. I remember that while crossing the Pacific on board ship a group of us discussed promotion with our officer escort. His advice was if you wanted promotion you should crawl. This proposal met with derision.

The failure of the respective governments and those in command to recognise the shortcomings of their manifestly perverse, unfair policy resulted in simmering resentment among those affected.

Having experienced both NCO and commissioned officer rank, I can categorically state that conditions for a commissioned officer were superior to those of an NCO. From a personal point of view the only advantage arising from this short-sighted policy was that I and my crew lived and messed together, which brought about a strong bond of brotherhood and comradeship. These qualities were essential for maintaining morale, efficiency and success in the face of ever-present danger.

We had volunteered our services to fight the enemy through the Air Force and in spite of the ill-conceived policy of the government and the RAAF Command, morale was high. We had volunteered to do a job and we retained our enthusiasm for flying and the determination to carry the fight to the enemy. It was fortunate for the Air Force Command and the government that the

strength of character of the flyers and their enthusiasm to achieve objectives outweighed the ineptitude of those in command.

Post Graduation

On completion of the course we were taken to the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation factory at Fishermens Bend in Melbourne to see the production of Bristol Beaufort bombers. It was interesting to view the progress of construction along the assembly line from the start to the finished aircraft rolled out and ready to be flight tested.

The Beaufort was a beefed-up version of the Bristol Blenheim light bomber. It was larger, heavier and slower than the Blenheim and carried a bomb load of 2,000 lb (908 kg) or one partially external torpedo. The RAAF Beauforts were fitted with two Pratt and Whitney R-1830 engines. These aircraft saw action in the Pacific area.

Our group was under the impression that the aircraft was already out of date, that in combat it would be outmatched by Japanese aircraft. Furthermore, it appeared that in the event that the aircrew had to abandon the aircraft, it would be difficult to do so. None of the group expressed a desire to fly this type of aircraft on operations.

The main test pilot for the 1,065 Beaufort bombers and Beaufighters made in Australia during the war was the civilian, Harold Shelton. Harold was born in Avenel, Victoria on 4th March, 1910. He died in Merimbula, NSW on 20th May, 2003

Harold also test flew the first 12 Australian-built Lincoln bombers. He clocked up 1,244 hours and over 2,000 test flights between August 1942 and July 1947.

Harold said,

> *I'd had the privilege of sitting in hundreds of those pilots' seats first and got them into the air on the way to the battlefronts for the very first time. Believe me, I take my hat off to those brave young men and their ground crews. They did a marvellous job for their country under often incredibly difficult conditions.*

The Beaufighters were assembled at Mascot, NSW. The Beaufort bombers and Beaufighters were used to drive the Japanese war machine away from Australia in the Allies' Pacific island-hopping campaigns.

Immediately after gaining my "Wings" I was posted to the Beam Approach Training Flight (BATF) at Point Cook. There appeared to be little doubt that I was destined for a war theatre where night flying and bad weather prevailed. This was a course on instrument flying under the hood in the Airspeed Oxford, together with another five hours on instrument flying exercises in the Link Trainer.

The Beam Approach was a radio transmitting device located at an airfield by which a pilot could tune into and by following specific procedures locate the airfield with precision and then land his aircraft while tuned to the beam transmissions. While listening to the beam transmissions and

making the landing approach when an altitude of 20 feet was reached it was desirable to see the surface of the runway to make a safe touchdown.

Promoted to the rank of sergeant I was now entitled to the privileges of the Sergeants' Mess. However, to gain these privileges it was necessary to pay a joining fee of 10 shillings, which I considered somewhat strange in view of the fact that the Air Force was obliged to provide messing facilities. No doubt the intention was to provide extra benefits for the members. I was never asked to pay a joining fee at any other Sergeants' Mess.

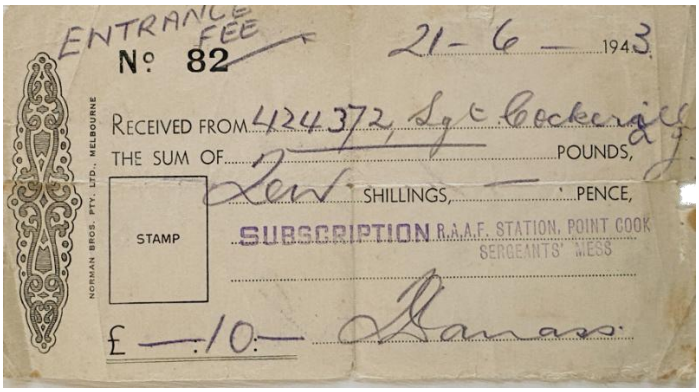

ENTRANCE FEE
No 82
21-6-1943
RECEIVED FROM 424372, Sgt Cockerill
THE SUM OF ... POUNDS,
Ten SHILLINGS, PENCE,
STAMP
SUBSCRIPTION R.A.A.F. STATION, POINT COOK SERGEANTS' MESS
£ -.10.-
Thomas
NORMAN BROS. PTY. LTD., MELBOURNE

Figure 20: Receipt for Entrance Fee to the Sergeants' Mess RAAF Station, Point Cook.

Successful completion of the Beam Approach Training course and another Link Trainer course brought to an end my time of some 4½ months at Point Cook. It had been a time of intense effort, study and continued pressure to achieve objectives. I was proud of my achievements.

I was then granted seven days' embarkation leave, which allowed me several days at home with my family and fiancée. I then had to report to No. 2 Embarkation Depot at Bradfield Park where with others we were divested of our tropical uniforms and kitted out with warmer underclothes. After several days we boarded a troop train for the overnight trip to Brisbane.

At Coffs Harbour and South Grafton stations I arranged for telegrams to be sent to my parents advising that I would be passing through during the morning. On arrival at Casino railway station my parents, sisters and Joyce were waiting on the platform to meet me. This would be the last time I would see my loved ones before returning, or if I didn't return from overseas, and there was no way that I was going to miss this opportunity to see them, fleeting though it was. Into this intimate family group savouring precious moments of mixed feelings of joy and sadness blundered the officious escort officer, who asked me who were these people and how did they come to be there. I told him what I had done and he berated me in front of my family, alleging that I had jeopardised the security of the contingent, which was absolute rubbish. I thought that his performance was very poor form indeed. There was no point in arguing with him and after he had had his say off he went. There was no way that my action had or would have jeopardised the contingent as I had indicated only that I was passing through. Another fact was that troop trains were passing daily up and down the line and the general public had no idea what forces were being transported or their destination.

On arrival at South Brisbane railway station we were bussed to a down-stream wharf on the north side of the Brisbane River where we boarded the pre-war Matson Line 20,000 ton cruise ship *Monterey*. The ship had been converted to a troop carrier with its attendant crowding of personnel in the cabins.

On making our way to our allotted cabins a small but interesting human relations incident occurred. Pilot Officer, Jack Brown, who had received a commission on graduating from No. 31 Pilots' Course was boarding the ship with some of us who had been on the same course.

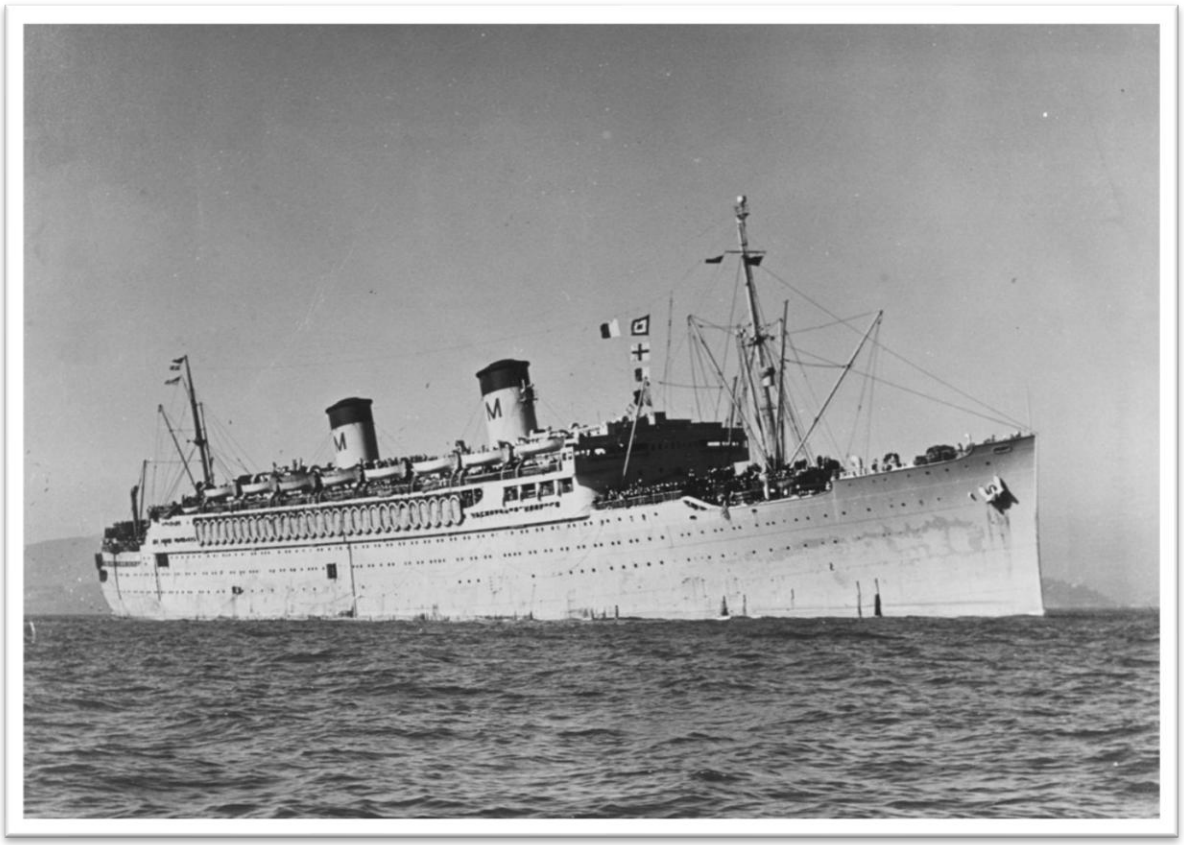


Figure 21: Matson Line AMS Monterey*, 20,000 tons. . Photo: US Naval History and Heritage Command.*

Somehow he had got his officer's cabin trunk into the doorway of the passage leading to the cabins where it was causing an obstruction. Displaying the typical attitude of a martinet he *ordered* the nearest two sergeants to take his trunk to his cabin. He made no request for assistance and didn't bother to name the sergeants, who had been on the same course with him several weeks before. An example of "power corrupts".

The Voyage to New York

Weighing anchor at 7:30 p.m. we glided silently down the Brisbane River. After passing out of the Heads we dropped anchor until early morning when we were away again with a fair speed. I found it interesting to see in the distance for the first time the fascinating shapes of the Glasshouse Mountains so named by Captain Cook. We stayed close to the coast for a couple of hours then changed course and the land gradually disappeared below the horizon.

For the first four days of the voyage the sea was rough but few were seasick. Fortunately it did not affect me.

American ship-board cuisine was somewhat different and new to us. The food was served cafeteria style with portions placed in indentations in a metal tray. A new experience was sauerkraut. All the food appeared to be shredded, mashed or minced with nothing that you could really get your teeth into. However, it was well prepared and appetising.

The ship continually changed course to defeat possible attack by submarines but maintained her fast speed day after day.

On board was a small contingent of American servicemen returning home owing to illness. Our contingent comprised LACs, NCOs and officers. The LACs and some sergeants were rostered on for kitchen duties while NCOs and officers were required to do submarine watch on the ship's bridge. I enjoyed my week on submarine watch.

A band was formed comprising Australians and Americans, which provided some very good entertainment.

Some enterprising journalistic-type Australians assisted by some Americans produced a weekly foolscap size newspaper, which is interesting to read now for its naïvety.

Mid-morning on each day of the voyage the captain in his southern states' drawl would make the following announcement over the ship's public address system:

> *Now hear this! Now hear this!*
> *This is the Captain speaking. This is the Captain speaking.*
> *Do not sit on the rail. Do not sit on the rail.*
> *Should you fall over-board this ship will not stop.*
> *Should you fall over-board this ship will not stop.*
> *That is all.*

The day before reaching Panama a rumour circulated around the ship that an American serviceman had jumped overboard and that someone had thrown him a lifebelt but the ship did not stop.

Going on deck in the morning of the sixteenth day after leaving Brisbane, there in the distance we could see land. I don't think anyone who has not been to sea could realise how we felt. It was exciting with a great feeling of anticipation and relief. It is hard to put into words one's feelings as nothing equals one's first landfall.

Being in the Torrid Zone the weather was very hot and humid.

On approaching the Panama Canal the ship stopped to take on a pilot and other officials. Soon after we were ordered to pack all our gear in readiness to disembark, if necessary. However, that did not happen.

There was much naval and aircraft activity around the Canal Zone, which provided us with a good opportunity to test our aircraft recognition skills.

Entering a series of locks on the canal the ship was raised to the level of the Gatun Lake. Proceeding at slow speed we passed through the narrow Culebra Cut to reach the lake and eventually the locks on the Atlantic side, which lowered us to the Caribbean Sea.

The Canal Zone was very well fortified with troops, guns, naval ships, aircraft, balloons and smoke-generators.

We pulled into Colon on Limon Bay where the ship was refuelled overnight. We were disappointed to learn that we were not allowed to go ashore. In the morning we were on our way alone, leaving behind the many ships that were in the bay and other interesting sights of the Canal Zone.

We steamed northward across the very blue Caribbean Sea with its drifting seaweed and flying fish, passing a number of islands on the way. After several days the coastline of the USA appeared on our port side. Two days later in the early afternoon we entered New York harbour passing the Statue of Liberty. Progressing to our berth we were surprised to see a bridge very similar to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was the Hell-Gate Bridge over the East River used exclusively by railway traffic.

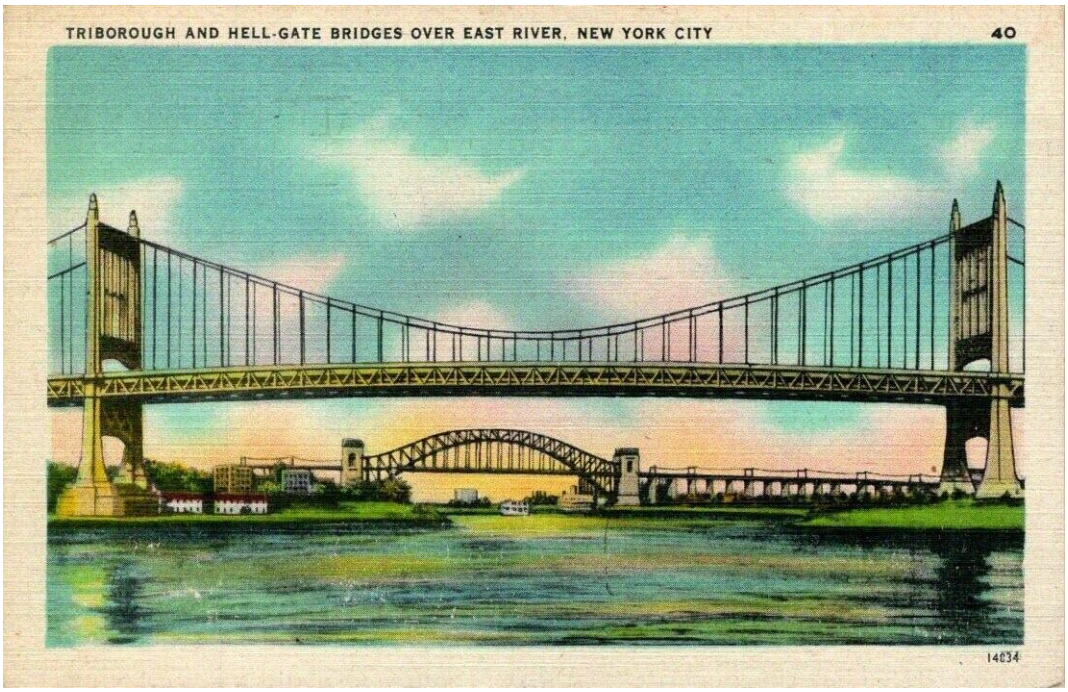


Figure 22: Postcard showing Triborough and Hell-Gate Bridges, New York City.

We tied up at a wharf not far from the burnt out wreck of the French liner, *Normandie.* At the outbreak of World War II the *Normandie* was in New York harbour, but was not used by the French for war service. On 16th December, 1941 she was expropriated by the United States Maritime Commission for conversion into a troopship. In the course of conversion, however, fire

broke out on 9th February, 1942 and the vessel capsized. This accident occurred just one day after the *Normandie* had been turned over to the US Navy by the US Maritime Commission.

Figure 23: Fort Slocum. New Rochelle Public Library Archives.

After disembarking we were taken to a US Army Officers' Training School at Fort Slocum located on a small island in Long Island Sound. This was a well-established facility with beautiful red brick buildings, polished floors, white tiled bathrooms and toilets, and good beds with sheets. After what I had experienced in the Army and Air Force this accommodation was like a first-class hotel.

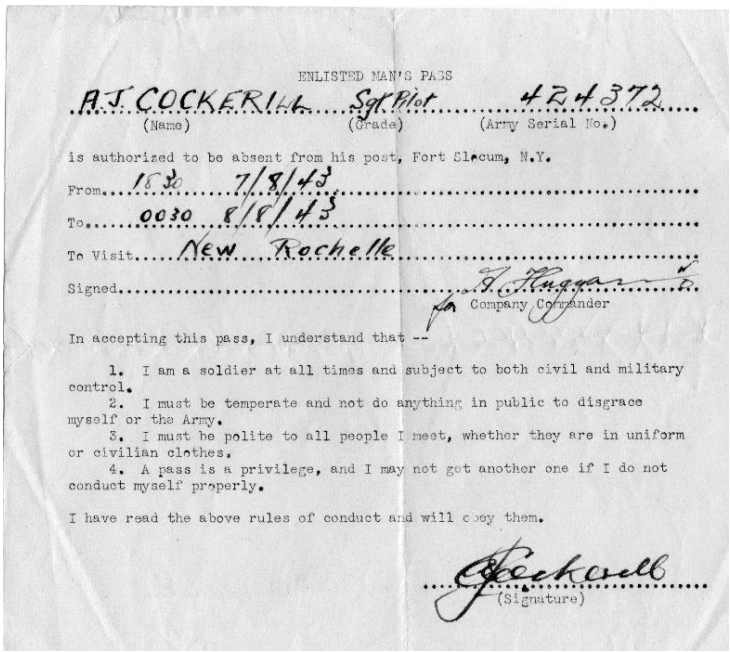
Figure 24: Barracks at Fort Slocum. Photo: Flickr.

From a flagpole in the main square flew an American flag, the largest flag I had ever seen. Throughout the day bugle calls were frequently played over the public address system, which didn't mean much to us but no doubt governed the lives of the officer trainees.

We were well catered for with an abundance of good food and coffee but tea was another matter being served cold in tall white enamel jugs in which were slices of lemon.

New York

We were allowed to go on leave each day so New York City was the destination catching an electric train at New Rochelle. We reported to the United Services Organisation (USO) where arrangements were made for us to go on tour of the city led by a retired US Army Colonel by the name of John S. Van Gilder. This tour lasted two days, the first stop being the Statue of Liberty where we climbed the stairs and ladders to the look-out in the statue's forehead. We visited the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street then the Empire State Building where we travelled by two fast lifts, which took us to the viewing area on the 86th floor. Times Square was interesting with its many neon advertising signs and the latest news headlines in moving lights. Camel cigarettes had an amusing and impressive advertisement where a three dimensional camel's head on the large illuminated cigarette packet blew smoke rings across Times Square.



ENLISTED MAN'S PASS

A.J. COCKERILL Sgt Pilot 424372
(Name) (Grade) (Army Serial No.)

is authorized to be absent from his post, Fort Slocum, N.Y.

From 1530 7/8/43

To 0030 8/8/43

To Visit New Rochelle

Signed J. Hagan
for Company Commander

In accepting this pass, I understand that --

1. I am a soldier at all times and subject to both civil and military control.
2. I must be temperate and not do anything in public to disgrace myself or the Army.
3. I must be polite to all people I meet, whether they are in uniform or civilian clothes.
4. A pass is a privilege, and I may not get another one if I do not conduct myself properly.

I have read the above rules of conduct and will obey them.

Cockerill
(Signature)

Figure 25: Fort Slocum Enlisted Man's Pass.

The city was indeed an impressive place with its many very tall skyscrapers.

The Automat Restaurant was an interesting innovation, which we had not previously seen. *The Automat* faced the footpath and offered a great variety of ready to eat foods, which could be easily seen in glass-fronted compartments. By placing the appropriate money in a slot a small glass door opened and one was able to take the food from the compartment. This compartmented wall of food measured approximately 15 feet long by 5 feet high. Perhaps the original fast-food take-away outlet!

On several occasions we visited the famous *Stage Door Canteen*, which was operated by the USO. Film stars made occasional visits to *The Canteen* but none appeared during our visits.

I thought it would be interesting to visit Greenwich Village one night. I couldn't get anyone to go with me so I went on my own. I was surprised to see so few people about the area and as I couldn't see anything special or extraordinary I returned to my accommodation.

On another night we visited Jack Dempsey's night club where dancing and drinking were the main activities. Jack Dempsey was a famous heavyweight boxer.

One afternoon we went to *Radio City Music Hall* in the Rockefeller Centre. *The Music Hall* had a seating for 6,000 and was the largest auditorium in the world. We saw a stage show, which gave the illusion that the scenes depicted were being acted under water. The most impressive act was the performance by the dancing girls known as *The Rockettes*, about 100 girls all of similar size and shape going through a dancing routine in perfect unison.

One evening we took the opportunity to attend the *Metropolitan Opera House*, known as *The Met* to see *The Vagabond King*, starring the Australian actor John Brownlee. At the end of the show we went back-stage and met Brownlee who appeared happy to see us.

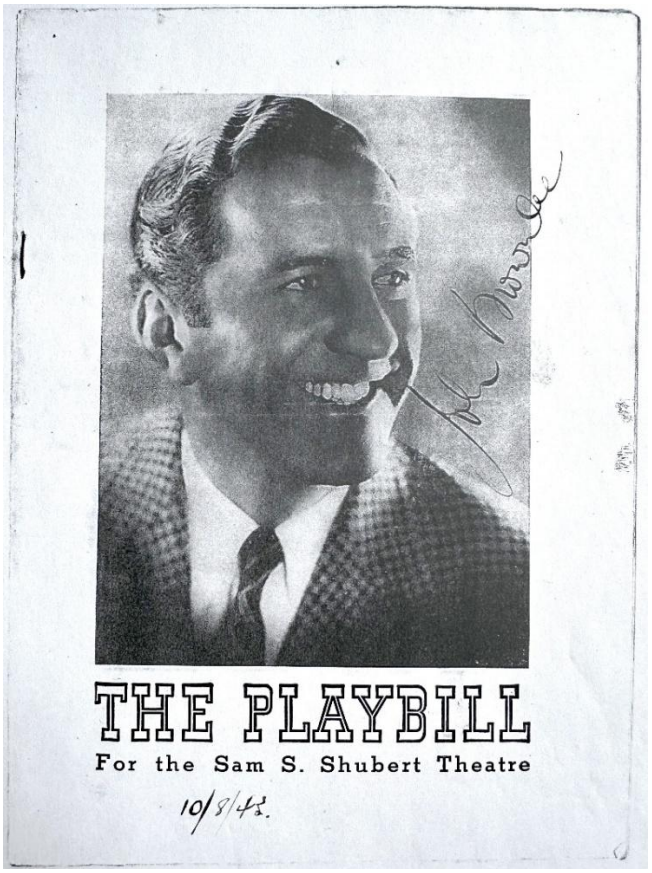


Figure 26: Signed photo from John Brownlee, performing at The Met.

When in New York I took the opportunity to visit *Macy's* big store where I bought a suitcase, a pair of black shoes and a blue shirt.

In our contingent was one, John (Jack) Beeson, a pilot, who was older than most of us. Prior to joining the Air Force he was a wharfie at Fremantle in Western Australia and as such he stated that he never bought anything. That was in the days before containers were used to transport goods by ship, which reduced the opportunity to damage and pilfer goods.

While the English language is spoken by a large proportion of the world's population some words can have different meanings in different cultures. This was the situation that faced Jack Beeson when on leave in New York he met and took a woman to dinner. During conversation it came to light that the woman had a good job with some organisation and Jack had said, "I suppose you get a good screw there". The woman was shocked and horrified at this suggestion. In that era in Australia the word screw was slang for wage or salary but had an entirely different meaning in the American language. Jack had some explaining to do.

The small German town of Kleve near the border with Holland posed a threat to the Allied advance and was attacked by 351 aircraft on 7th October, 1944. Unfortunately Jack was killed in this operation when his and another Halifax collided in mid-air over the target area.

After 10 days at Fort Slocum we had to vacate this excellent accommodation and move up state to a summer camp in the Catskill Mountains. Before departing we were subjected to a Free From Infection (FFI) parade. After 10 days in the Big Apple those in charge thought we may have caught something so we all had to line up in a near naked state to go before a seated doctor who inspected our genitals for signs of infection. To my knowledge the whole contingent successfully passed the inspection.

We boarded buses for the trip to the Catskills. We travelled on a major highway and after passing through a large "clover-leaf" junction joined a divided highway, which displayed a sign stating, "Do not travel below 25 mph". I wondered how my father would feel about being confronted with such an instruction when he rarely travelled above that speed in his 1926 model Chevrolet car. He would certainly have appreciated the excellent road surface, much different to the poor gravel roads on which he had to travel.

The accommodation at the camp was in large wooden huts. The atmospheric temperature was in the high 30s ºC and we were in our winter uniforms. The water was so highly chlorinated that it was undrinkable and the only other liquid available was Pepsi-Cola from a slot machine, which did not quench one's thirst. The camp site was completely surrounded by thick bush with no distant view. There was nothing to do and nowhere to go. On the fourth day this unfortunate set of circumstances ended when we were taken by bus to a wharf in New York where we boarded the Cunard Liner, *Queen Elizabeth* for our voyage across the Atlantic.

During our short stay in USA another incident occurred regarding our officious officer escort. Bill Waterton, who had also been on 31 Pilots' course at Temora and Point Cook was in our contingent. He had an uncle living in Chicago and desired to take the opportunity to visit him. The escort refused Bill's request for the visit so Bill went over the escort's head and asked the Australian Consul or someone in the Diplomatic Corps in New York for approval, which was granted enabling Bill to spend several days with his American uncle.

Following further training in England Bill was posted to the Mediterranean theatre where among other targets he attacked the Ploesti oil field north of Bucharest in Romania, which was reputed to be one of the most heavily defended facilities under German control.

Returning safely from war service Bill's post-war career was as pilot and captain with one of the major Australian airlines. He bought an American Harvard single engine aircraft with its original American markings including the numbers 555 painted on its fuselage, which gave it the name of *Triple Nickel*.

Bill had his *Triple Nickel* plane at the No. 10 EFTS 50th Anniversary Reunion at Temora during the Anzac weekend in 1991, which Joyce and I attended.

I went for a flight with Bill in his Harvard. I took over the controls and flew around for a while after which Bill put us through three slow rolls.

Crossing the Atlantic

We sailed in the evening with a destroyer escort, which lasted for 24 hours after which we were on our own. This ship was very fast but changed course every seven minutes to make it difficult for a German submarine to aim a torpedo at it.

The ship was heavily armed with a large naval gun in the stern, many anti-aircraft guns and rockets. One day while at sea the ship's defences went into action. A smoke float was dropped over the stern and when the ship had travelled a suitable distance the gunners operating the large gun in the stern opened fire and hit the smoke float. Some of us had decided to go down and watch the gun being fired. After the first shot we quickly departed the area because the noise and the blast nearly deafened us. Balloons were released and rockets and ack-ack guns successfully hit some of them.

Figure 27: Messing Card on Q.E. *Atlantic crossing, front and rear sides.*

After boarding the ship we were advised that we would be having only two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. I will always remember that first meal on board as one of the best meals I have ever had. It consisted of bully beef, diced potato and diced carrot. It had a familiar taste and required some chewing and contrasted sharply with the American food, which was generally mashed, pulverised or shredded. The feeding arrangements were due to the fact that the ship had on board a contingent of 14,000 American servicemen.

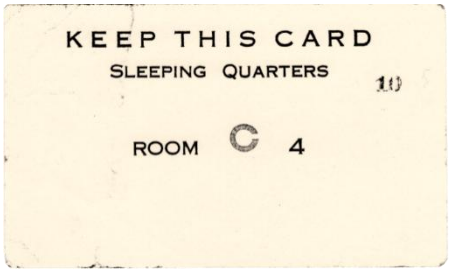


Figure 28: Sleeping Quarters Card on Q.E. *Atlantic crossing.*

We Air Force fellows were required to do submarine watch and I remember taking up the look-out position on a number of occasions on the port side of the bridge. This position enabled a good view of a sector of the sea and as we travelled further north to see the wonderful northern lights of the Aurora Borealis.

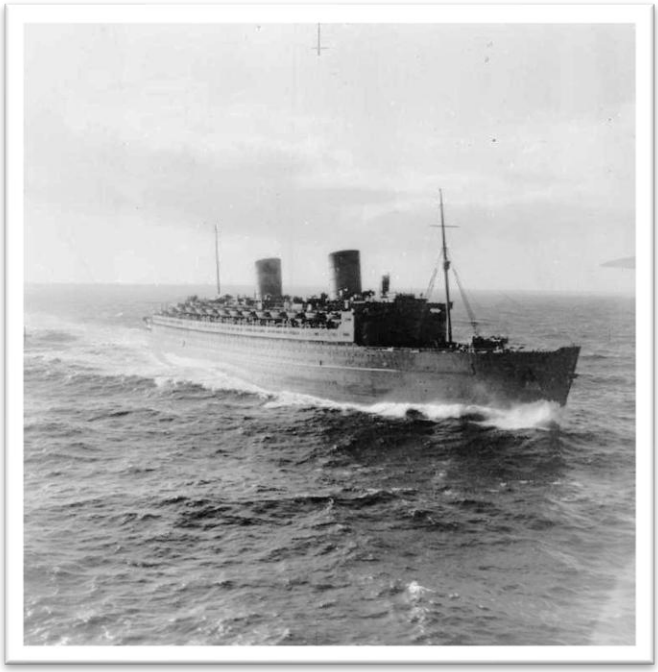


Figure 29: Cunard White Star Liner Queen Elizabeth*, 85,000 tons. At the time the largest ship in the world 1,000 feet long, 118 feet wide, 180 feet high from keel to top of the forward funnel, with 14 decks and 4 propellers. Photo: Wikimedia.*

Our accommodation consisted of three-tiered bunks in cabins on "B" deck. The bathing water was salty.

One day I decided to go and see how all those Americans were accommodated. I only got as far as "D" deck and the smell was so overpowering that I was unable to venture any further. As far as I could see some of the servicemen did not have proper sleeping facilities as they were lying in the passageways and on the stairs. All windows and portholes were blacked out and not allowed to be opened with the consequence that ventilation was poor.

A kiosk sold a limited number of items such as sweets, chocolates and only Pepsi-Cola in the way of drinks. Needless to say I am not very keen on Pepsi-Cola. Realising that sweets especially chocolates would be in short supply in the UK I bought a quantity of the very nice Hershey chocolates.

After five days sailing we anchored in the Firth of Clyde on 25th August, 1943. The next day we were taken off the ship in lighters to the town of Greenock.

The fate of the magnificent liner *Queen Elizabeth* was sealed when it was destroyed by fire in waters off Hong Kong on 9th January, 1972.

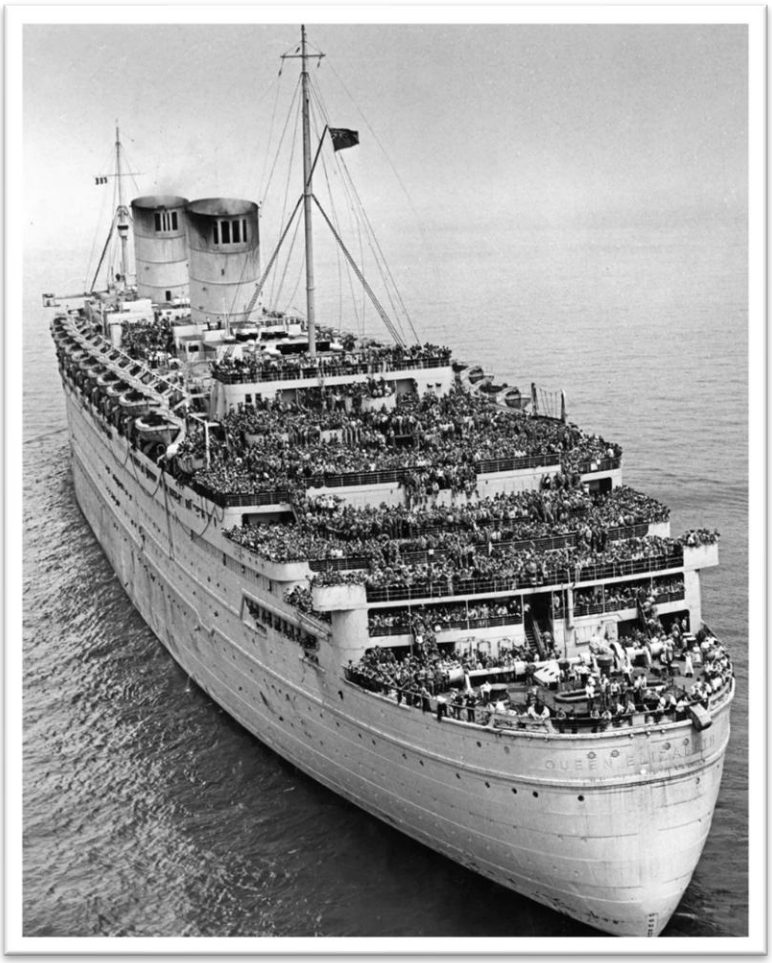


Figure 30: QE *at New York, 6th July, 1945 returning 15,000 American Servicemen from Europe with a crew of 980. Photo: Encyclopedia Britannica.*

In the United Kingdom

On land again we entrained for the overnight journey to Brighton on the south coast of England, arriving there on my 20th birthday, 27th August, 1943.

The RAAF occupied two of the main hotels on the Esplanade, *The Grand* for administrative purposes and *The Metropole* for accommodation.

A Bofors anti-aircraft gun was located about 50 yards to the east of *The Grand Hotel*.

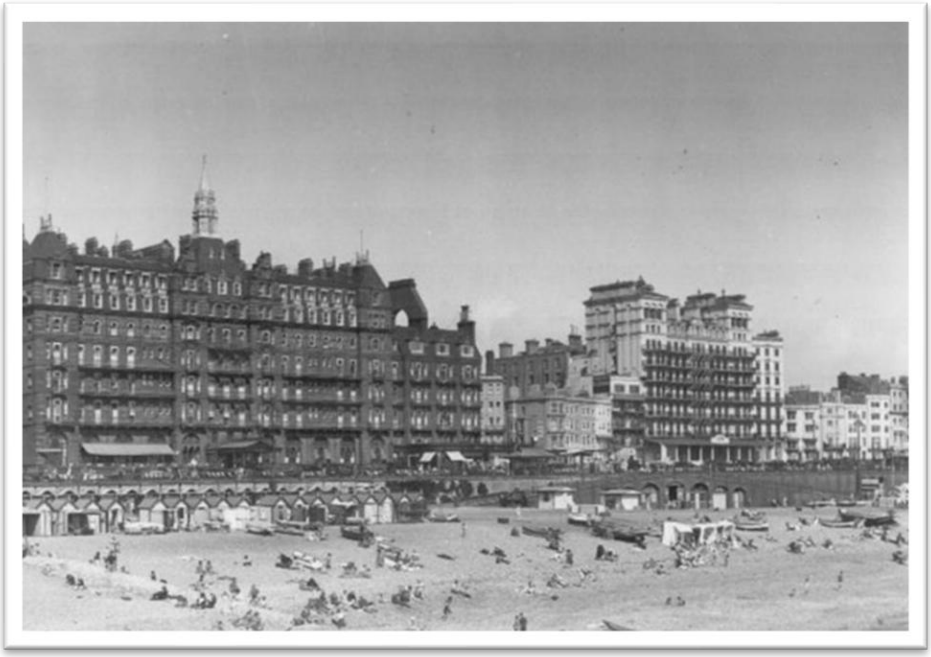


Figure 31: Metropole *(L) and* Grand *(R) Hotels, Brighton.*
People weren't allowed on the beach during the war as it was mined.
It was entirely covered with pebbles. Photo: Bert Clayton.

I thought it both interesting and amusing to see a council sign on a stand in the footpath, which read, “Do not expectorate on the footpath. Penalty £5”.

Children used to hang around on the footpath in front of the hotels. They were always well mannered and courteous. Talking to them I was very impressed with the way they spoke, their excellent diction and grammar, which was in marked contrast with that of Australian children of similar age. To them chocolate was a rare treat so I gave them the supply I had bought on the *Queen Elizabeth*.

There was little to do in Brighton regarding Air Force matters. A popular pass-time was to go dancing during afternoons at the ballroom in the famous *Pavilion* built many years ago by a British monarch.

London was 60 miles away, which took exactly an hour to reach by electric train. I distinctly remember the strange feeling I had when getting out of the Victoria Street station and wondering which way to go to The Strand and *Australia House* where the *Boomerang Club* was located. Someone in the group had an idea and off we went and arrived at our destination.

Australians generally stayed at accommodation in Gloucester Road.

It was interesting and educational to visit the many historical places for which London is famous and to attend the many wonderful live stage shows. Dances in the famous *Covent Garden Opera House* and *Hammersmith Palais* drew large crowds.

Figure 32: West and Palace Piers and sea front, Brighton.

Suspended from the ceiling at *Covent Garden* was a revolving mirror ball, which caused small reflections of light to revolve around the interior of the building. When the lights were dimmed in the hall the revolving reflections had an attractive effect.

Figure 33: The Royal Pavillion, Brighton. Photo: Fenliokao.

During our month's stay at Brighton we were given a week's leave to go anywhere in the UK. An organisation run by the Lady Ryder Foundation arranged holidays for servicemen with host families at various locations.

Another fellow, namely Stanley George, with a farming background and I decided to accept an invitation to spend a week on a farm at Great Malvern. The farm was operated by a married couple. The husband was an Englishman who had spent some time in Australia before the war where he met and married an Australian girl from Adelaide. They operated a dairy selling bottled raw milk to the local community. The milking herd was required to be tested periodically to ascertain a TB free status. The milking took place in stone premises about 30 feet from the house and the milk bottling equipment was located in a room adjacent to the kitchen. A pig sty was located adjacent to the milking shed.

The owner always wore a collar and tie. Every morning the employed farm hand appeared at the kitchen door for instructions for his day's work. The farm hand spoke a dialect so strange that I couldn't understand a word he said.

The house was 300 years old and had a very large kitchen with a flag-stone floor. A fuel stove was located in a massive fire-place in the kitchen.

We slept in an upstairs bedroom with single beds. The ceiling followed the contour of the roof and a dormer window was located in the roof.

In the town we saw the home where Sir Edward Elgar, the famous musical composer had lived. Among his many compositions was the well-known, *Land of Hope and Glory* which was used as the Coronation Ode to King Edward VII in 1902. Elgar died on 23rd February, 1934.

One day we went to Stratford-Upon-Avon where we visited Ann Hathaway's cottage and other places of historic interest connected with William Shakespeare. We hired a punt and did some poling on the Avon River.

We enjoyed riding around the countryside on bicycles. The narrow country lanes were sealed with bitumen and we sampled the blackberries growing in the roadside hedges.

One day we rode to the top of a very high treeless hill, a feature of the area, to see what was on the other side only to be greeted by more hills stretching into the distance. On the way down this hill Stan had a buster off his bike and ripped the knee out of one of his trouser legs. Our hostess tried to repair the damage but was only partially successful. Stan was so embarrassed by the damaged trousers that he chose to stay at the farm rather than go on any other outings.

On market day I accompanied our host to Worcester, situated on the Severn River, lying in rich agricultural country with good transport connections by road, rail and water. Our host planned to visit the market and do other business.

Before leaving home I noticed that he had a large basket of mushrooms and on asking where they had come from he said that he had got up at 4 o'clock and picked them in the fields and planned to sell them at the market in Worcester.

At the market cattle were being sold and a red shorthorn cow with two-day old calf at foot was sold at auction for £60/10/-. I was astounded at this price remembering that at Casino one would have been lucky to get £5 or £6.

While in Worcester I took the opportunity to visit the Cathedral, which stands on a ridge above the river.

King John, who died on 19th October, 1216 was responsible for granting in 1215 the Great Charter of English liberties known at the *Magna Carta*. He was interred in the Cathedral where during the war his tomb was protected by sand bags.

While looking around this great building I was standing near King John's tomb when a fellow about my age dressed in clerical garb and collar suddenly appeared about 15 feet away from me. Up to that time I was unaware that there was anyone else in the building. Without any opening remarks the first thing he said was that he was convinced that all of the great churches had been built by Roman Catholics. It was obvious to me by the tone of his voice and his bald emphatic statement that he had a biased sectarian problem and I had no intention of discussing the matter with him. Being there at that time and having what I thought could have been an Australian accent made me wonder what this young fellow was about – strange indeed! I went on and climbed the stairs to the top of the tower where I had a good view of the town.

Our holiday came to an end. We thanked our hosts for their hospitality and the pleasant time we had had in the country and returned to Brighton.

To the Advanced Flying Unit (AFU)

I was posted with effect from 28th September, 1943 to No. 20 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit located at Croughton, Northamptonshire with Headquarters at Kidlington near Oxford.

One night on returning by Air Force vehicle to Kidlington station I noticed embedded on a bend in the centre line of the road reflective "cats eyes". On asking about them I was told that they were experimental devices to let drivers know where the road was in foggy or poor conditions of visibility. Since then this simple and effective device has received universal acceptance.

After a short time at Kidlington I and the other fellows with whom I was posted were transferred to Croughton, a wartime station with dispersed facilities. Sleeping accommodation was in Nissen huts. The ablution facilities were sub-standard, lacking proper maintenance and cleaning. Because of the poor condition of the NCO's ablution facilities I sometimes went over to the officers' ablution building and had a bath. No doubt I was contravening some rule but I was fed-up with the poor conditions at our facilities. There were only showers at the NCO's ablution block.

Meals in the Sergeants' Mess were very poor. A particular grievance was the daily evening meal, which consisted of a small quantity of poor quality melted cheese on a piece of fried bread. Other meals were skimped and of poor quality. This situation caused considerable discontent. Following complaints there was some improvement in meal quality. There was little doubt that the food situation at the Sergeants' Mess was caused by the kitchen staff black-marketing a considerable portion of our rightful rations.

In my opinion some administrative staff at aircrew training establishments were incompetent and lazy regarding their duty of care for the welfare of trainees. I believe this attitude arose from the fact that each batch of trainees was at a station for a relatively short time. While the trainees found conditions unsatisfactory in a number of situations regarding their welfare they tolerated the sub-standard conditions in the knowledge that they would soon be moving on. Also to complain would in all probability label one as a trouble-maker and cause disruption to the usual routine. A trainee also had to consider that administrators were in a position to jeopardise his future progress. So problems remained unaddressed. Administrators remained at stations for years and they would not have tolerated sub-standard conditions regarding their own welfare.

As the turn-over of trainees was relatively fast these administrators would have absolved themselves from their responsibilities in the knowledge that each batch of trainees would be there for only a short time and would not take the trouble to complain.

There is no doubt that these administrators did not realise what effect their incompetence had on the morale of trainees.

The small village of Croughton was a short walking distance from the Air Force station and the only pub in the village, the *Blackbird Inn* was a popular place for Air Force personnel to spend their evenings. Air Force personnel comprised New Zealanders, Englishmen and Australians. In a typical pub evening the fellows would be yarning, drinking beer and singing while someone played the piano. Several New Zealanders were good piano players and at closing time they insisted on playing the *Maori Farewell*, much to the annoyance of the Englishmen, who always wanted them to play, *God Save the King* but the New Zealanders never relented.

During the time I was stationed at Croughton the "powers-that-be" called a Church Parade for one Sunday morning. At no other time during my military career was a Church Parade held. All personnel were required to assemble on the parade ground. Protestants of all denominations were assembled together and marched off to the Church of England church in the village. Catholics attended a separate service. Those who claimed adherence to some minor religion or were agnostics were given some duties to perform. I believe the general feeling among the personnel was that Church Parades were unpopular, possibly because they reminded fellows too closely of home. I distinctly remember feeling very homesick during the church service. If the intention was to improve morale, it had the exact opposite effect as far as I was concerned.

The Church of England church in Croughton was built many centuries ago and on the internal walls there were many historic religious murals.

Early in October a week's leave provided me with the opportunity to visit the city of Edinburgh.

During World War I my father had spent some leave there. He sent a postcard to his mother featuring the extraordinary railway bridge over the Firth of Forth. This bridge of unique design was constructed of large iron pipes and painted a reddish-orange colour.

Figure 34: Forth Bridge across the Firth of Forth. Photo: MrMasterKeyboard.

I just had to see this mighty bridge so I took a bus to the ferry point at South Queensferry on the south side of the Firth of Forth where I boarded the ferry that took me to North Queensferry on the north side. The ferry trip gave me an excellent view of the bridge, which was most gratifying.

I availed myself of the opportunity to participate in several guided tours, which proved interesting and informative.

One tour included the magnificent Edinburgh Castle perched on a large rocky outcrop in a commanding position overlooking the city, then down the Royal Mile to view the ancient St. Giles Cathedral, to John Knox's house. John Knox was a famous Scottish 16th century Protestant reformer and historian. His countrymen indeed have always believed that to Knox more than any other man Scotland owes her political and religious individuality.

Figure 35: Postcard of John Knox's House, Edinburgh.

Then to other historic features along the way to the *Palace of Holyrood House*, which is used by the reigning monarch when in residence in Edinburgh. The monarch's bedroom was approached through a very low doorway causing an approaching enemy to lower his sword and put him at a disadvantage in any attempt to harm the monarch. A large tapestry adorned one wall of the bedroom in which was depicted a central human figure whose eyes appeared to follow one when moving around the room.

Another interesting guided tour was of a disused coal mine located at Leith.

Then followed a visit to the Charles Younger Brewery where during the tour it was suggested that we smell the rim of a great vat containing liquid. On doing so our noses suffered a severe astringent shock, which I believe was caused by the release of carbon dioxide from the fermentation process.

When talking to young people I was impressed with their Scottish nationalistic outlook – Scotland the brave! Scotland forever!

While in Edinburgh I stayed at the Toc H hostel for servicemen. Toc H was an inter-denominational association for Christian social service, founded as a memorial to British youth who perished in World War I. Ablution facilities consisting of a number of bathrooms were in the basement where it cost sixpence to have a bath. That fee had to be paid to a fellow who looked after the facilities. He spoke in a broad Scottish dialect that I was unable to understand.

For the first couple of months at Croughton we were allowed 48 hours leave each week, which was subsequently reduced to 24 hours.

Taking advantage of the 48 hours leave during November 1943 I journeyed down to Newport to visit a grand aunt on my mother's side of the family, arriving there on the Saturday morning and because of the limited time available having to leave on the Sunday morning.

I met grand aunt Florrie Churchill, who was 77 and partly deaf but very well. She didn't look anything like Grandma Emily Yates. Living with her were Clarissa, called "Cissy", and her husband Leonard and their children John, who was attending University, Joyce and Valerie. I believe Clarissa was the daughter of Albert (deceased), who was Florrie's brother.

I also met Paul Churchill, Clarissa's brother.

On the Saturday night John, Paul, Joyce and I travelled by train to Barry, a seaside town, where we attended a popular dance and had an enjoyable evening.

They were all pleased to see me and wanted me to visit them again.

As there was nothing to keep me at Croughton during time-off I took the opportunity on a couple of occasions to travel by bus to the city of Northampton some 30 miles to the north. This was a very old city famous for the tanning of hides and the manufacturing of boots and shoes. The main museum had a fascinating display of many types of footwear down through the centuries from very early times.

While walking around the city I came to the *Casino Café* and as my home town was Casino I thought it was a good omen and decided to have lunch there. Sitting down at a table and scanning the menu I noticed that steak was available. Not having had a meal of steak for months I ordered it with great anticipation. In due course the meal came along but my anticipation soon turned to disappointment as the steak was so tough that my knife had great difficulty in cutting it and eating it was impossible. I believe it must have been horse meat. So much for an omen!

My visits meant staying overnight so I checked in at a local pub. I went roller-skating and in the evenings attended a popular dance hall, which had a good orchestra and a liquor bar.

One day I visited the attractive city of Oxford with its many old college buildings.

Great grandparents on my father's side of the family came from the Scarborough area. Scarborough is located on the north-east coast of England and has many large hotels, which were built to cater for the holiday makers who made it a popular beach resort during the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century.

During World War I my father had visited Scarborough and sent postcards of the city to his family, which I had seen. While there he had met and spent some time with William Taylor, a distant relative. He suggested that if I visited the city I call on William Taylor at an address he had sent me.

I was interested to see Scarborough, which had been familiar to my great grandparents and if possible meet Taylor.

Early in February 1944 on a week's leave I travelled by train to Scarborough.

Taylor was not at the address, which my father had given me so I decided to call on the Town Clerk to ascertain his whereabouts. This was a good decision as the Town Clerk knew Taylor and where he and his wife conducted a boutique fashion shop in the central business district to which I was directed.

The Taylors welcomed me, William remembering his association with my father. I accepted their invitation to stay with them in their very nice home. The Taylors were very hospitable and took time to entertain me. They had two daughters, one married and the other living and working in Cambridge.

During my stay the wet weather caused the heels of my American shoes to disintegrate as they appeared to be made of cardboard. I called on a shoe repairer, who mended them with genuine leather while I waited.

My father had also mentioned the Mackwoods, who were distantly related to the Cockerill family. They were a married couple farming near the village of Ayton so I decided to go and meet them. I travelled by bus to the village located south of Scarborough where I was met with many stares from the villagers. Following directions I walked through the village along a gravel road then left down a muddy lane to the farm. I made myself known to the lady of the house and

explained my mission. She offered me some lunch, and her husband, who was ploughing a near-by field with a pair of draught horses soon arrived for lunch.

We had an interesting discussion on how we were related but he could not afford to spend any more time talking so I followed him around a couple of furrows before leaving. I remember him voicing a certain amount of displeasure about low-flying aircraft, which he said upset his horses.

The opportunity now arose to achieve two objectives, to visit the university city of Cambridge and meet another distant relative, the Taylors' daughter, who lived there. I have forgotten the daughter's name. She showed me around the university colleges such as *Trinity*, *Peterhouse*, *Corpus Christie* and *Kings* with its famous chapel. I gained the impression that it was a pretty city.

We found that an Air Force squadron dance was being held in the evening at a popular venue so we decided to see if we could attend. The door-keeper asked me for my ticket to the dance. I told him that I didn't have one as I had been on leave. On paying the admission fee he allowed us to enter. Of course we didn't know anyone attending the dance. After several dances we decided to leave. I escorted her to her lodgings and I returned to my pub. The next morning I returned to the station.

We were issued with two flying suits. One was a fawn coloured complete overall made of a very strong fabric like duck with a number of large pockets and was worn as an outer garment. The other suit was designed to keep airmen warm at high altitudes. It was made of a very smooth fabric like satin and was insulated with kapok or down. This suit was meant to be worn under the outer suit.

In order to keep warm while in bed during the winter at Croughton I wore a warm singlet, pyjamas, a jumper and the high-altitude flying suit.

It was at Croughton on 14th November, 1943 that I experienced my first snow-fall. That winter was bitterly cold and living in a Nissen hut with a pot-bellied stove glowing red hot made little impression on the cold conditions. On several occasions during the winter the fog was so intense that even the birds were grounded.

On a short leave in London during that winter I had to catch a train early in the morning to return to the station. On stepping outside my lodgings I was met with a pea-soup fog. It was a complete white-out. When standing in the middle of the footpath it was not possible to see the facades of the buildings fronting the footpath or the gutter. I had to feel my way along the facades of the buildings to keep myself orientated and know when I came to an intersection. Fortunately the railway station was not far away.

To fly over a town and note its layout made it much easier to find one's way about the town when it was visited on foot. This was the case when on day-leave several of us visited the pretty town of Royal Leamington Spa some 30 miles to the north-west of Croughton. Being a spa town many people spent time there in the spas for therapeutic purposes. While looking around the

town we met a small group of Air Force fellows amongst whom I was pleased to meet Bob Vickers, who had been on the same course with me at Point Cook.

While at Croughton I met William Patrick (Bill) Quan, who came from Murwillumbah in the north-east corner of NSW. He had attended Woodlawn Catholic College in Lismore and knew people who I knew in Casino.

We practised various types of bombing exercises at Croughton. One of which I found particularly interesting was the use of a bombing simulator. To operate the simulator the bomb aimer lay prone on a platform at the end of which a bomb-sight was fixed. The bomb aimer's platform was about four feet above the floor. In operation the simulator projected a moving technicolour view on the floor, which showed the countryside, cities, towns and villages, as if one were flying in an aircraft. On sighting through the bomb-sight and pressing the bomb release button a light appeared where the bomb was presumed to have landed.

I was attached to "D" Flight and flying went on apace during October and November 1943. The aircraft were the viceless, pleasant to fly Airspeed Oxfords fitted with Cheetah, nine cylinder radial engines, the same type that I had trained in at Point Cook.

For the first 20 days in December, I was posted to No. 30 Course with No. 1538 Beam Approach Training Flight at Croughton.

When not flying the Oxfords the program included many hours of instrument flying in the Link Trainers.

From 27th December, 1943 to 27th January, 1944 I was attached to the Night Flight where all my flying was done at night time, which included a great variety of exercises.

When not on these special training flights we returned to the original flight to which we were attached on entry to the AFU.

I found it sheer joy to go off solo and do a variety of exercises of my own choosing while listening to the reassuring chatter of the Cheetahs.

It was great fun to do steep turns around columns of cumulus clouds, to dive down and cut off their tops and to dive down through hollows in the clouds. It so happened on one of those occasions when I dived down through a hollow in a cloud on reaching its base a white painted Wellington located in the centre of a large ring passed immediately in front of me, which gave me quite a surprise. I believe the Wellington was one of those fitted with anti-submarine detection equipment.

From the air it was pretty to see the countryside covered in snow in winter, the fields delineated by hedgerows and the deciduous trees with their black trunks and limbs against the white backgrounds.

With the amount of training I had done I was thoroughly familiar with all aspects of flying Oxfords. I was at one with that aircraft.

The poems High Flight and Flight epitomise so well my feelings at that time.

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, – and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew –
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Pilot Officer J.G. Magee, Jnr,
No. 412 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force

John Gillespie Magee wrote this poem, and sent it to his parents, shortly before he was killed in a flying accident on 11 December 1941, aged nineteen. Born in Shanghai in 1922 of an American Episcopalian father and an English missionary mother, Magee had had a traditional British public school education. War, however, cut short a promising academic career, for, after winning a top scholarship to Yale, he decided he would return to England and join the Royal Air Force. The United States authorities refused to grant him a visa, so, in time, he went across to Canada and enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a pilot. He was stationed at Digby in Lincolnshire, with 412, one of RCAF's Spitfire squadrons, when he died. (Biographical details, source unknown.)

FLIGHT

How can they know the joy to be alive
Who have not flown?
To loop and spin and roll and climb and dive,
The very sky one's own.
The urge of power while engines race,
The sting of speed,
The rude winds' buffet on one's face,
To live indeed.

How can they know the grandeur of the sky,
The earth below,
The restless sea, the waves that break and die
With ceaseless ebb and flow;
The morning sun on drifting clouds,
And rolling downs –
And valley mist that shrouds
The chimneyed towns.

So long has puny man to earth been chained
Who now is free,
And with the conquest of the air has gained
A glorious liberty.
How splendid is this gift He gave
On high to roam,
The sun a friend, the earth a slave,
The heavens home.

Flight Cadet Brian P. Young, RAF

This poem was written in 1938 by Flight Cadet B.P. Young, aged twenty, during his last year at the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell, where he won the Sword of Honour. Born and educated in South Africa, Brian Young was shot down in France on 13 May 1940, in a Hurricane of 615 Squadron during the first days of the German breakthrough in the West.
After months in hospital he returned to operations in 1942 as the captain of a Sunderland flying boat in the Battle of the Atlantic. As a flight commander in 422 (Royal Canadian Air Force) Squadron of Coastal Command he often flew, operationally, the aircraft which visitors to London have quite recently seen moored on the River Thames, within sight of Tower Bridge on the route from Westminster Pier to Greenwich.
Young retired from the Royal Air Force in 1973 with the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. (Biographical details, source unknown.)

From 20th – 28th February, 1944, four of us who had completed the AFU course were attached to the Night Flight located at the satellite station at Weston-on-the-Green, another wartime dispersed station. Our job was to test fly aircraft to ascertain if they were airworthy for trainees to carry out night flying exercises.

By the end of February I had been at the AFU for five months and felt that it was definitely time to move on. Eventually the four of us were notified of our postings to various OTUs. My posting with effect from 29th February, 1944 was to No. 21 OTU at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. We agreed that the news called for a big celebration at a local pub. The pub at which our celebration was to take place was quite some distance away in the local village. With three bicycles between four of us, Pilot Officer Limbert gave me a lift on his bike.

We settled in to a happy celebration drinking beer and top-shelf stuff such as cherry brandy. It was nice and warm in the pub, like all English pubs, and I was feeling pretty merry at closing time, it had really been some celebration.

On leaving the pub I started to walk along the road but when the effect of alcohol and the cold night air hit me I collapsed on the side of the road. Limbert called out to me a couple of times but I was unable to answer him, so he and the others rode on. It was a dark night with no moon and no street lights.

Several hours later I woke up feeling quite sober but unable to get my bearings. However, a farm gate was directly in front of me so I climbed over it and headed across a field towards a dimly discernible light coloured two storey building with a high masonry wall enclosing its back yard.

On approaching this building a number of dogs in its back yard started a chorus of very loud savage and threatening barking indicating that they were in attack mode with that particularly menacing sound of evil intent, which sent shivers up my spine.

Reaching the front of the building, which looked like an inn and faced a road I knocked loudly several times on the front door. A woman poked her head out of an upstairs window and asked what I wanted. I asked if I could be put up for the rest of the night. She responded by asking where I was from to which I replied that I was stationed at the Air Force station. Pointing in the direction of the station she said if I followed the road I would come to it. Apologising for disturbing her sleep and thanking her for the directions, I started along the road. After walking for a considerable time the lights of the runway came into view. As luck would have it night flying was still in progress but no aircraft were taking off or landing.

Arriving abreast of the perimeter fence I left the road crossed over a deep ditch, climbed over the high chain-wire fence and walked straight across the middle of the illuminated runway, concerned that the lights might be switched off at any moment.

Everything was deathly quiet, no aircraft, no personnel, no noise of any kind and no one challenged me, an eerie situation indeed.

It was close to 5 a.m. when I got to bed. Awakening rather late and feeling somewhat seedy, contrary to my condition prior to going to bed, I was the last into breakfast, which was far from ideal for my state of health.

When packing up for the posting to OTU I realised that I had lost my forage cap sometime during the night's peregrinations but fortunately I had a spare cap. Thinking that it was possible that I had left the cap at the pub where we were celebrating I cycled out and asked the proprietor if he had seen it. He hadn't but informed me that a women's group was meeting in a nearby hall and one of them may have found it so I went and asked them but no one had.

It had been a night of strange adventure in which I had experienced the gamut of emotions from happiness and euphoria, through terror and anxiety to relief.

I never considered myself to be a big drinker and this episode was a salutary warning to be more careful in future. A lesson well learned!

To the Operational Training Unit (OTU) (Course 77)

Soon after our arrival at Moreton-in-Marsh we were told that as OTUs were under the jurisdiction of Bomber Command we could be called on to participate in operations against the enemy as had been the case in the first thousand bomber raid mounted by Sir Arthur Harris soon after he was made Officer Commanding Bomber Command. Bomber Command's motto was, "Strike Hard Strike Sure".

Figure 36: Bomber Command Crest. UK Crown Copyright.

It was Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Fisher who said, “In war, violence is of the essence and moderation is imbecility.”

We were now introduced to the large twin-engined Wellington X bomber, familiarly known as the “Wimpy”. This aircraft’s construction was based on Barnes Wallis’s geodetic design made of aluminium and covered with fabric. The construction provided immense strength and resistance to battle damage. To me, it always appeared to be a sluggish aircraft and somewhat stiff on the controls.

" AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION " CARDS. The Third-Class Proficiency Test Series. (Copyright.)
Revised Edition VALENTINE & SONS LTD., DUNDEE AND LONDON. Printed in Gt. Britain.

Figure 37: The Vickers Wellington, "Wimpy".

Barnes Wallis, engineer-scientist invented the bouncing bomb used successfully in the dam-busting raids.

Moreton-in-Marsh was a large well-equipped station with facilities appropriate for the training and testing of aircrews for battle. The food was better than that at the AFU. However, ablution

facilities while better than at AFU, still left something to be desired. They were poorly ventilated and shower cubicles were fitted with duck-boards, which never dried out and were never cleaned. Again those responsible for hygiene failed in their duty of care.

OTU brought together some fellows I had not seen since ITS and EFTS days.

While the Battle of Britain had been won and there were sufficient fighter squadrons to defend the country and on occasions to act as escorts for bombers, the demand for fighter pilots had dropped to a very low level. As the bombing campaign stepped up there was an increasing demand for bomber pilots and bomber crews. Consequently those pilots who had trained on Wirraways at SFTS with the objective of becoming fighter pilots now found themselves destined to be bomber pilots.

Shortly after our arrival other airmen in the various aircrew disciplines arrived and we were advised to select our crews. There was no attempt by the authorities to assist in this process in any way. Airmen talked to each other and in a few days crews sorted themselves out.

At this time a rumour went around that some crews were needed in North Africa.

In view of the cold winter that I had recently experienced and the continuing cold conditions with snow falls I was interested in going to a warmer climate but the English navigator whom I had invited to join my crew was not interested at all so we parted company. I then met up with an Australian navigator, who was keen to experience some warmer weather and was willing to join my crew. He was Henry Day from Wasley, South Australia with a Roseworthy Agricultural College Diploma in Agriculture.

Looking for a wireless operator I met an amusing fellow Australian, Ken Saxby from Murwillumbah in NSW, who had lived for some years in Fiji. Sax, as he was known, had a penchant for English history and was happy to join my crew.

Requiring a bomb aimer I was introduced to an urbane man of the world, an Englishman who was born in Kensington, London where he lived and worked. He was a journeyman printer by trade and an excellent piano player by the name of Syd Green.

A rear gunner and a mid-upper gunner were now required and the existing crew members helped to find them. A little fellow by the name of Frank Smith, from Nottingham, with a great sense of humour whose favourite smokes were Wild Woodbine cigarettes and who could play the mouth organ, became our rear gunner. He had previously served with the Sherwood Foresters Regiment in the Bahamas. A tall pleasant somewhat naïve young Englishman 19 years of age, who lived in Doncaster became our mid-upper gunner. His name was Charlie Walker and he was our youngest crew member. I happened to be the second youngest in the crew.

Pilot training developed initiative, decision-making and self-reliance. We pilots were now faced with the situation that our actions had to take into account their effect on fellow crew members. It was a matter for all crew members to observe the old adage, “One for all and all for one”.

Welding the crew into an effective unit was a gradual process with each one learning to live and work with each other. While it was important to do things together, it was also just as important to allow each member space to move and do their own thing.

As time progressed our crew became a tight-knit, loyal and efficient unit. An important factor in bringing this about was the fact that we were all NCOs, living in the same quarters and dining in the same mess. There was no feeling of "us and him" as when the pilot was a commissioned officer living and dining in separate quarters.

AIRCREW

Fighter trail etched white on blue,
Bomber captain, seaplane crew;
Like Gods; these men, though wrought as we
Are brushed with immortality.
Their youth not lost to age as years go by
But grandly, in a moment, soaring high
through conquered sky.
Harold Balfour

The pace of training now quickened with a definite emphasis towards operational conditions. There was a very full training program comprising lectures and exams, practical exercises in a variety of subjects and flying exercises. Among our studies was instruction on the operation of the Bristol Hercules radial engine, which was the type fitted to the Wellington X aircraft. In one of the lecture rooms there was an engine with cutaway sections showing the operation of the pistons and the sleeve valves, a magnificent piece of precision machinery.

Day and night flying included exercises in cross-country navigation, bombing, fighter affiliation, air firing, infra-red aerial photography, single engine flying and overshoot procedure. Where applicable many of the flying exercises were carried out at heights of 15,000 to 19,000 feet, which required the use of oxygen.

It was mandatory to carry out a specific number of parachute and dinghy drills, including wet dinghy drills. For these we had to attend a nearby heated indoor swimming pool where after entering the pool we were required to get ourselves into a floating aircraft-type dinghy. We had to carry out these drills on two different days, and to familiarise ourselves with the limited signalling equipment contained in the dinghy.

Dinghy and parachute drills also included exercises in abandoning the aircraft from its various exits in the quickest possible time. These drills were practised on a stationary aircraft in a hangar.

We were told that in the event of baling out and landing in the sea or ditching and being immersed in the cold North Sea, life expectancy was about 20 minutes. Not a happy prospect.

There was always concern about the likelihood of a German gas attack. Consequently everyone was issued with a gas mask and gas cape. These items were always required to be taken by all personnel when on leave.

We were required to experience exposure to gas. This was to be my second experience of exposure to gas. Fitted out with a gas cape to protect our clothes and body and a gas mask to enable us to breathe we had to walk through a triple-tent set-up in which there was a release of tear gas in the middle tent. After this exercise we were required to repeat the performance without the gas mask with results similar to those experienced when in the army.

On arrival in England we were issued with RAF style grey coloured battle dress uniforms. On 10th March, 1944 these were replaced with RAAF style navy blue battle dress uniforms, which we considered looked much smarter.

During the third week in March 36 hours leave gave a mate and me the opportunity to visit Birmingham where we went to a dance and a movie show besides having a good look around the city.

Near the end of March my crew and I spent a short leave in London. After dinner at *Khan's Restaurant* in Piccadilly Circus we attended a dance at the *Covent Garden Opera House* where the seating was cleared away to allow dancing on the large floor area. This was a very popular dancing venue.

Next day, during the afternoon we attended a party celebrating the second anniversary of the opening of the *Boomerang Club* in *Australia House*.

The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester were there accompanied by Mr. S.M. Bruce, former Prime Minister of Australia. The Duke was the Governor General designate of Australia. The Duke was entrusted with a gold cup, to be known as the Gloucester Cup, to take to Australia, which was a gift from the RAF to the RAAF, being the prize for the winner of on-going competition between RAAF squadrons.

One day while in London my crew and I had just crossed a street at an intersection when a pleasant looking gray-haired lady possibly in her late fifties approached me and said, "Thank you for coming." After which we had a brief discussion about the necessity of defeating Hitler. I thought the lady's personal expression of gratitude for my contribution to the war effort was a very pleasing gesture.

On 10th April, my crew, an instructor and I carried out an aerial search over the Irish Sea for a dinghy from a ditched aircraft. Unfortunately we didn't find the dinghy. On the way back to base we landed at the airfield on the southern part of the Isle of Man where the instructor wanted to meet a friend. I kept the engines running while he greeted his friend.

Much of the time weather conditions and industrial haze limited visibility. However, on a cross-country flight during the second week of April we experienced a rare and marvellous occasion when the visibility was so good that we could see for a distance of about 150 miles while flying at a height of 15,000 feet. It was the best day I had seen since arriving in England.

At that time of the year the countryside was a marvellous picture with everything looking so green and fresh, so different to the Australian countryside. Weather conditions were ideal.

On 16th April, 1944 we were engaged in a cross-country flight carrying out various exercises at a height of 15,000 feet. While far off in the Central Mediterranean Area 142 RAF Squadron was engaged in operations against the enemy. Navigator Flight Sergeant (F/Sgt.) John Stuart Boden born on 14th July, 1922, who had been in "A" Class with me at Casino Intermediate High School was attached to that squadron. John was good at maths so it was not surprising that he had qualified as a navigator. Flying a Wellington X JA 127 the crew had been briefed to attack the Budapest Railway Marshalling Yards in Hungary. After taking off at dusk at 20:14 on 16th April, 1944 nothing was heard from the aircraft. It was presumed lost due to enemy action with the crew of six being killed. The remains of crew members were originally buried at Gyal Park Cemetery, Gyallagit, County Pest. Their remains were later moved to the Budapest British Military Cemetery, (Solymar). John left behind an English widow, who later remarried and emigrated to Australia where she lived in Queensland.

On occasions some of us took advantage of the bus service that operated between Moreton-in-Marsh and the beautiful Cotswold village of Broadway with its weathered stone-built houses. It was customary to have a drink at the 17th century *Lygon Arms Inn* where the date 1613 was carved into the breastwork masonry of the main fireplace. I found it both interesting and intriguing to see not only this building but many other buildings of great antiquity still in daily use throughout Great Britain.

Following drinks at the *Lygon Arms* we adjourned to the local dance hall. It was essential to catch the bus, which left promptly at 11:00 p.m. as there was no alternative transport back to the station.

The Cotswold area is a beautiful part of England with its lovely villages and rolling downs countryside. This anonymous poem appeared in the magazine, *This England*, Winter Edition, 1999 and epitomises the Cotswolds, together with a mention of Burford the town, which is dubbed the "Gateway to the Cotswolds".

> Oh, fair is Moreton in the Marsh
> And Stow on the wide wold,
> But fairer far is Burford town
> With its stone roofs grey and old;
> And whether the sky be hot and high,
> Or the rain fall thin and chill,
> The grey old town on the lovely down
> Is where I would be still.
>
> Oh, broad and smooth the Avon flows
> By Stratford's many piers,
> And Shakespeare lies by Avon's side
> These thrice one hundred years;
> But I would lie where Windrush sweet
> Laves Burford's lovely hill;
> The grey old town on the lovely down
> Is where I would be still.

An interesting exercise for all crew members was what was called “Fighter Affiliation”. This required a fighter such as a Hawker Hurricane to carry out simulated attacks on our aircraft, which necessitated us taking evasive action. The most effective evasive action was the “corkscrew” where, for example, if the fighter attacked from the rear port quarter, the rear-gunner would give the order, “Corkscrew port, go!” whereupon the pilot would immediately make a diving turn 30º to port and dive 1,000 feet then make a climbing turn 30º to starboard and climb 1,000 feet repeating this action until the fighter gave up the attack.

The “corkscrew” placed tremendous stresses on aircraft and crew. Pulling out of the dive the aircraft and crew were subjected to very high “G” forces, while at the top of the climb and altering the attitude of the aircraft a state of weightlessness was experienced.

During one of these “Fighter Affiliation” exercises a piece of fabric approximately 2 feet by 6 feet was ripped from the starboard front side of our Wellington aircraft.

On 27th – 28th April, 1944 we participated in a night flying exercise of seven hours duration, which included a variety of exercises for all crew members. Taking off after seeing the sun set we saw the sun set for the second time in the same day and flying all night we saw the sun rise before landing. A unique experience. At the end of this long exercise our fuel was at a critically low level so I had to make sure that our approach and landing were perfect to avoid the necessity of going around again – Landed safely with great relief!

Located near the entrance to the station was a hypobaric decompression chamber. The chamber, made of steel looked like a tank lying on its side. At one end it had the controls and a glass viewing window and at the other end a small opening fitted with a door. This opening allowed personnel to enter and leave the chamber. Inside was a small table and bench seating. Six airmen entered the chamber, four put on oxygen masks while two who had volunteered did not.

The exercise had two objectives. The first was to see if all aircrew trainees were capable of enduring high altitude flying up to 30,000 feet. The second was to demonstrate at first hand what happened to airmen when deprived of oxygen.

For the exercise the man-hole was closed and a vacuum pump started to reduce the atmospheric pressure and air in the chamber. The airmen without oxygen masks were asked to write their names on a piece of paper, the letters of the alphabet and to do some simple arithmetic. At the beginning of the exercise they performed these exercises without difficulty but as time progressed and the atmospheric pressure and air progressively reduced they attempted to do these simple things thinking that they were doing them successfully, until in the end they were not capable of doing them at all and had almost reached the stage of passing out. When the atmospheric pressure and air were restored these fellows quickly revived. It was a dramatic lesson demonstrating the importance of using oxygen for high altitude flying. No other ill effects were experienced by our group. The rule was that when aircraft reached a height of 10,000 feet all personnel on board were required to don oxygen masks and plug them into the oxygen supply line.

By 9th May, we in Course 77 had completed 10 weeks of intense effort in operational training and were granted nine days leave. This leave was spent in London with some members of my crew where we did some sight-seeing, attending several live stage shows for which London theatre is renowned and viewing some of the latest movie shows.

To the Battle Course at Acaster Malbis (Course 26)

On completion of our leave we were posted with effect from 18th May, 1944 to Acaster Malbis, a short distance south of York. On the way to this location we passed through Tadcaster, the centre of a brewing industry, which produced the popular Tadcaster Ale.

The course was designed to improve our physical fitness prior to participating in operations against the enemy. Our training included physical exercises, route marches, cross-country runs and unarmed combat with instruction in how to defend oneself if attacked and if necessary to kill.

We attended lectures on a range of subjects including an address by an RAF officer, who had escaped from one of the Stalag Luft (POW) camps in Germany. He had made his way to a Baltic Sea port on the German coast where he joined a small trading vessel, which took him to neutral Sweden whence he was eventually repatriated to the UK.

We had our photos taken, which we kept for possible use in identification papers in the event that we landed in an occupied country and needed the assistance of the underground escape organisation.

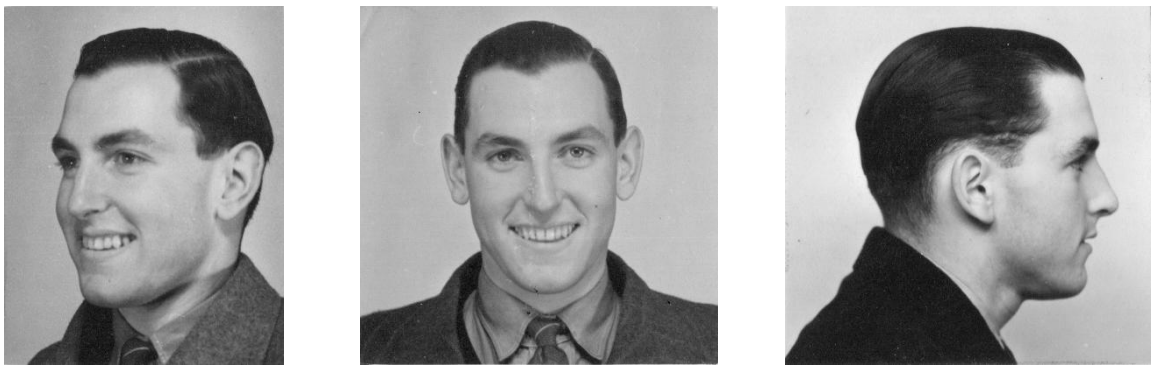


Figure 38: Bert's Escape Kit photos.

It was with enthusiasm that we accepted instruction in firing the blue steel, snub-nosed ·38 Smith & Wesson revolver. I was surprised by the amount of recoil that this weapon produced when fired.

We were told that we would not be equipped with a personal firearm when on operations as this would place us in a more dangerous situation if shot down and we tried to defend ourselves from capture while armed.

The weather at this time was very pleasant and conducive for outdoor activities.

With our proximity to York and its many attractions, it was natural for course participants to spend their evenings there.

On our trips to the city Italian POWs in their reddish-brown uniforms were seen with hoes cultivating a crop in a field.

In the same field red poppies were in flower. It appears that they grow wild in the UK and on the Continent.

I remember seeing a train stopped at a railway station and on the platform a German Officer in field gray uniform of the Wehrmacht (Army) and several other German POWs.

Both the Italian and German POWs were in all-probability held at Eden Camp, POW Camp 83 located at Malton, midway between York and Scarborough. It was one of the earliest POW camps built in England to house Italian and German POWs.

The camp is now a Modern History Theme Museum featuring the original POW huts containing the same two-tier bunk beds and sparse furniture. Many wartime artefacts and military equipment are also on display.

York is a fascinating ancient city with a history dating back thousands of years. It was an important location for the Brigantes, a tribe that inhabited much of the Yorkshire area in ancient times. The historian Ptolemy mentioned Eborakon as a Brigantine settlement.

During the Roman occupation of Britain Eboracum, as they called it, was developed into a permanent fortress.

At a later date the Vikings occupied the site for a long time. In recent times remnants of their occupation have been uncovered and displayed for the benefit of the public.

The stone city walls pierced by gateways were built in the 13th century. They still exist and are some three miles long.

York is an important religious centre with many churches, the largest and the most magnificent being the Minster in which is housed an outstanding post-war memorial to the Air Force.

Historically the Monarchy has had a close association with the strategically located York.

It is traditional for the sovereign's second son to hold the title The Duke of York. It was King George VI, previously, The Duke of York, who said: "The history of York is the history of England."

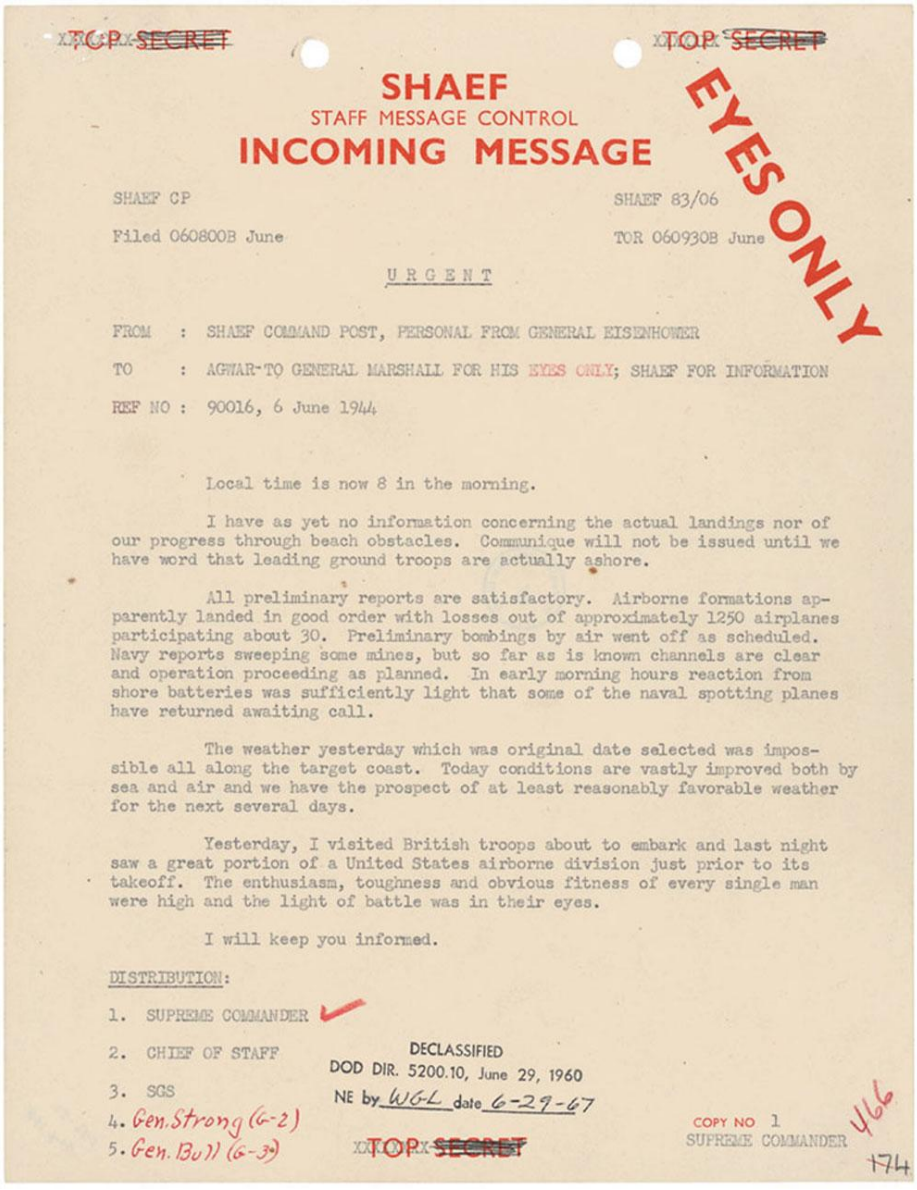
For amusement there were picture theatres, dance halls, amusement arcades and numerous pubs.

Our early visits to York were centred on the *Coach & Horses* pub, a large establishment, which didn't particularly appeal to us. In our wanderings around the city we came across an intimate little pub behind the Minster and close to Bootham Bar, a gateway in the ancient stone wall. The pub had a piano in a room which accommodated us nicely. Syd Green, the Bomb Aimer could

play the piano without written music and if one hummed a tune for him he could immediately play it. My favourite tune was "Stage Coach", which Syd played very well. See page 153 for the music sheet and the online web address to hear it. While the beer flowed Syd would keep on playing and we would sing along. It was a great way of bonding our crew together.

While the usual morning parade was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. some of us liked to hear the headline news on the BBC 8:00 a.m. radio broadcast. It was on 6th June, 1944 that the startling announcement was made that Allied forces had landed earlier that morning in Normandy. We rushed out onto parade and told those already there the news but they weren't inclined to believe us. The thought passed through our minds that the war could possibly be over before we became operational.

The following is a copy of the top secret message from General Eisenhower, to General Marshall regarding the Allied landings in Normandy on the morning of 6th June, 1944.



TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

SHAEF

STAFF MESSAGE CONTROL

INCOMING MESSAGE

EYES ONLY

SHAEF CP — SHAEF 83/06

Filed 060800B June — TOR 060930B June

URGENT

FROM : SHAEF COMMAND POST, PERSONAL FROM GENERAL EISENHOWER

TO : AGWAR-TO GENERAL MARSHALL FOR HIS EYES ONLY; SHAEF FOR INFORMATION

REF NO : 90016, 6 June 1944

Local time is now 8 in the morning.

I have as yet no information concerning the actual landings nor of our progress through beach obstacles. Communique will not be issued until we have word that leading ground troops are actually ashore.

All preliminary reports are satisfactory. Airborne formations apparently landed in good order with losses out of approximately 1250 airplanes participating about 30. Preliminary bombings by air went off as scheduled. Navy reports sweeping some mines, but so far as is known channels are clear and operation proceeding as planned. In early morning hours reaction from shore batteries was sufficiently light that some of the naval spotting planes have returned awaiting call.

The weather yesterday which was original date selected was impossible all along the target coast. Today conditions are vastly improved both by sea and air and we have the prospect of at least reasonably favorable weather for the next several days.

Yesterday, I visited British troops about to embark and last night saw a great portion of a United States airborne division just prior to its takeoff. The enthusiasm, toughness and obvious fitness of every single man were high and the light of battle was in their eyes.

I will keep you informed.

DISTRIBUTION:

1. SUPREME COMMANDER ✓
2. CHIEF OF STAFF
3. SGS
4. Gen. Strong (G-2)
5. Gen. Bull (G-3)

DECLASSIFIED
DOD DIR. 5200.10, June 29, 1960
NE by WGL date 6-29-67

TOP SECRET

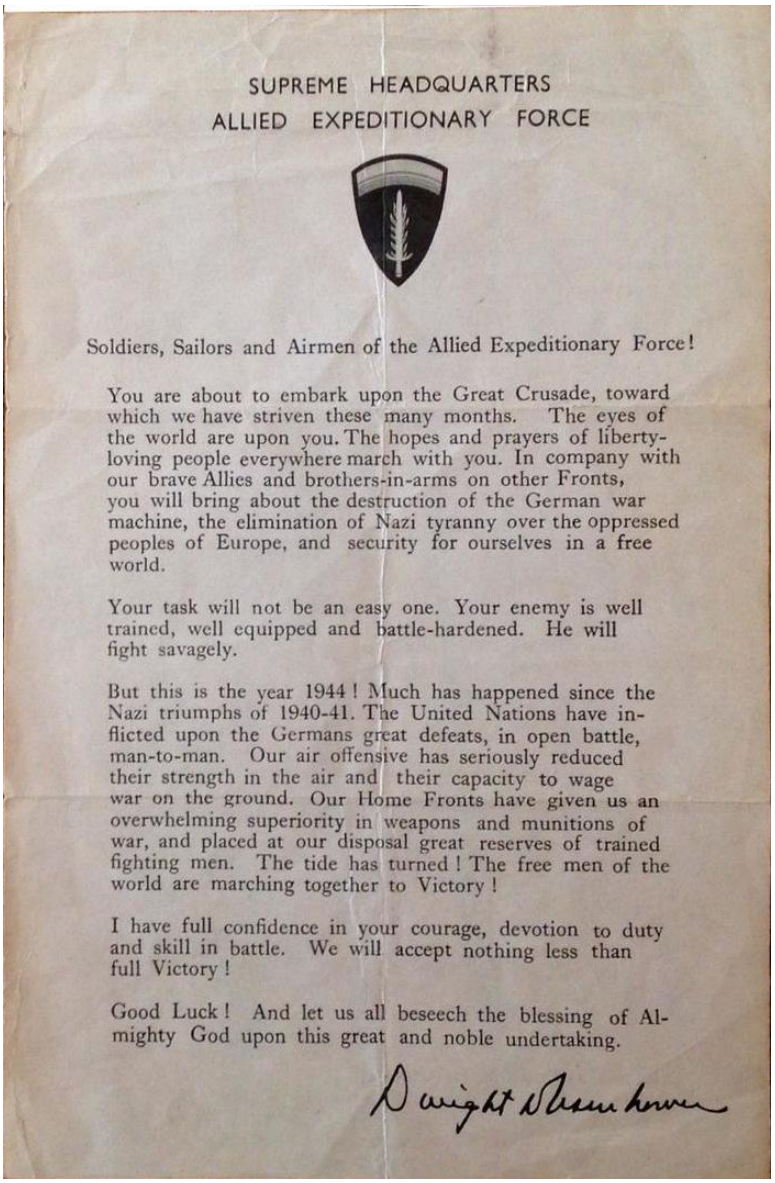
COPY NO 1
SUPREME COMMANDER

466

174

Figure 39: General Eisenhower's message to General Marshall regarding Normandy Landings.

Prior to the Allied landings the Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower sent the following message of "Good Luck" to all the armed forces.



SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944 ! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned ! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory !

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory !

Good Luck ! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Figure 40: Message from General Eisenhower to all the armed forces in advance of the Allied Landings.

The Battle Course was extended by a week and the final exercise was a three mile cross-country run in which I came eighth.

On completion of the course I had never been so fit. I felt as though I was walking on air.

V-1 Flying Bomb Attack

This weapon was also called the Buzz Bomb or Doodle Bug.

The first of Hitler's diabolical terror weapons had special significance for the East End of London. The following article, which appeared in the magazine, *This England* Summer 1975 edition, recalls the history of the location that came under attack:

The unkind would say that there could be fewer unlovely places from which to start the journey to the beauty of East Anglia than the East End of London. Yet there is splendid history in the wide streets of Whitechapel and the Mile End Road and no other exit from London – north, south or west – can boast the generous width of road along which we leave on our 111 miles journey to Norwich.

The old coaching road, as wide then as it is today, began at Whitechapel Church and proceeded along the Mile End Road, past the People's Palace. It was in May 1887 that Queen Victoria, in her Golden Jubilee Year, opened the Queen's Hall, the first part of the People's Palace to be built. Among those present at the ceremony was Sir Walter Besant, the Victorian novelist.

For years, Besant had been a champion of London's East End which he had described as "an utterly unknown town of two million people with no public buildings of importance, no municipality, no gentry, no carriages, no soldiers, no picture galleries, no theatre, no opera – they have nothing". In the start of the People's Palace in the Mile End Road, Besant saw his dreams coming to reality. In his novel, "All Sorts and Conditions of Men", which was set in the East End, his hero and heroine felt strongly that an antidote was needed to the emptiness and misery of life there, and so they built a "Palace of Delight".

Bow's Bomb

With memories of the triumphs and the troubles of the People's Palace – the original Queen's Hall part was destroyed by fire in 1931, but rebuilt on a new site and opened in 1937 by King George the Sixth – we continue down Bow Road and, passing the picturesque Trinity Almshouses ("for decaged sailormen") we come to Bow or, to give it its full name Stratford-le-Bow. Stratford was originally the "street ford" on the old Roman road and acquired the added "le-Bow" when a bridge was built there over the river Lea, on the suggestion of Queen Maud, wife or King Henry I. It was at Bow on Tuesday, 13th June, 1944, that the first German V1 "flying bomb" fell in Britain just after the Allied invasion of Europe.

The V-1 was a pilotless aircraft. It was a preset control monoplane powered by a crude but inexpensive jet motor. Carrying a 1,060 kg warhead, it flew a low-level powered flight path at about 400 mph for a maximum range of about 160 miles. The weapon caused considerable damage to property and loss of many lives. The V-1 was launched from specially designed fixed ramps, which faced the direction of the target area.

V-1 sites were bombed repeatedly by Bomber Command. Many flying bombs were shot down by anti-aircraft guns, Spitfires and Typhoon fighter aircraft. By using a clever manoeuvre the fighter disrupted the aerodynamics of the V-1s, which upset their gyro-guidance system and caused them to crash before reaching the target area.

When on leave in London on several occasions I saw and heard these flying bombs in flight and heard the loud explosions when they landed. They were aimed at London with the consequence that their attack was indiscriminate. I remember seeing a row of terrace houses still standing that were rendered unsafe for habitation due to the blast effect of one of these weapons. The bomb had landed nearby and the blast from the explosion had seriously cracked the walls of all of the

houses in the terrace. In a house at the time of the attack a pot plant that was standing on the front window sill had been blown across the room and embedded in the brick wall. Air raid sirens sounded warnings of flying bomb attacks and people rushed to the air raid shelters.

To combat the V-1s, London's anti-aircraft defences were moved to the south coast and squadrons of fighters patrolled what became known as "flying bomb alley" above the fields of Sussex and Kent. As backup, an immense balloon barrage was set up on the approach to London along the 20-mile ridge between Cobham and Limpsfield. Of the 9,000 V-1 firings between June and September, 1944, a quarter failed to cross the coast and only a quarter of the remainder got near the capital. Croydon was the favourite flight path – one observant dentist counted 37 V-1s droning over his surgery in one day. Just under 6,200 people were killed by the V-1s and 18,000 seriously injured.

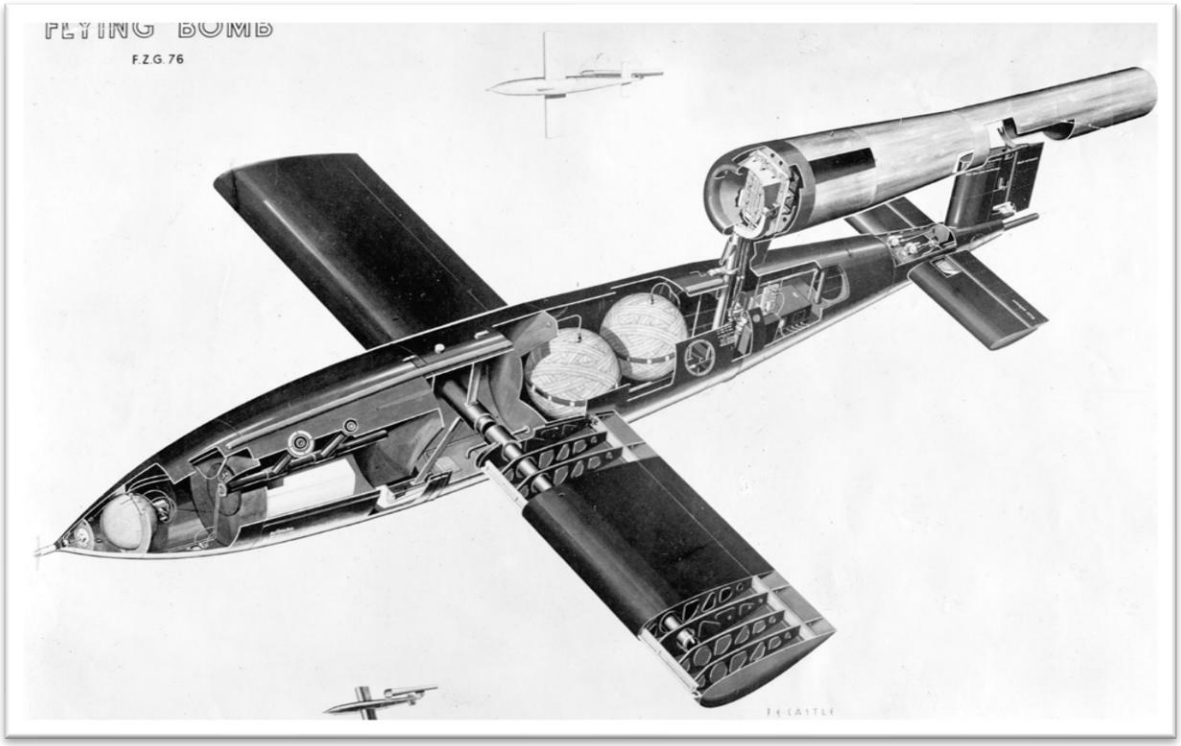
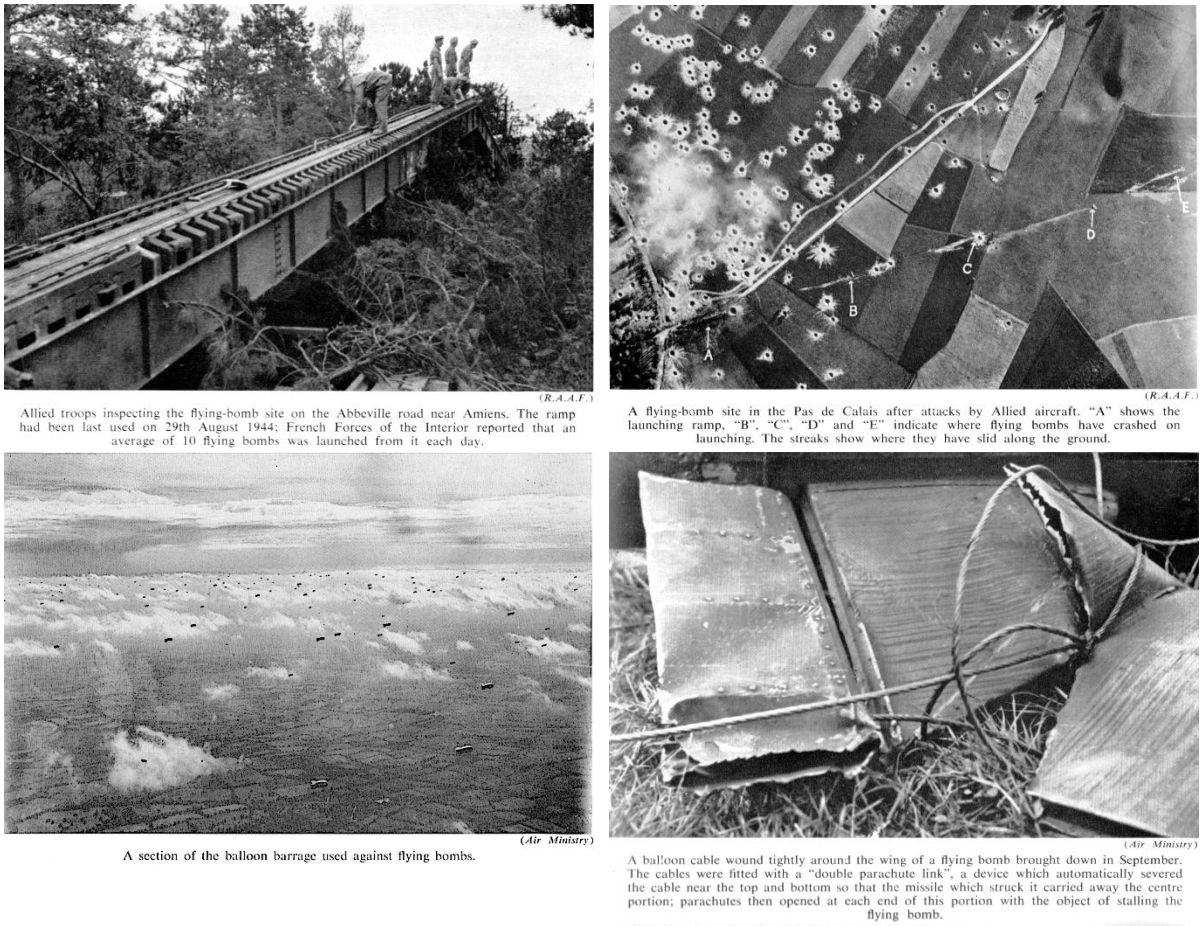


Figure 41: V-1 "Cut-away" image, US Air Force. Photo: Wikimedia.



(R.A.A.F.)

Allied troops inspecting the flying-bomb site on the Abbeville road near Amiens. The ramp had been last used on 29th August 1944; French Forces of the Interior reported that an average of 10 flying bombs was launched from it each day.

(R.A.A.F.)

A flying-bomb site in the Pas de Calais after attacks by Allied aircraft. "A" shows the launching ramp, "B", "C", "D" and "E" indicate where flying bombs have crashed on launching. The streaks show where they have slid along the ground.

(Air Ministry)

A section of the balloon barrage used against flying bombs.

(Air Ministry)

A balloon cable wound tightly around the wing of a flying bomb brought down in September. The cables were fitted with a "double parachute link", a device which automatically severed the cable near the top and bottom so that the missile which struck it carried away the centre portion; parachutes then opened at each end of this portion with the object of stalling the flying bomb.

Figure 42: V-1 and Balloon Barrage related images.
Reproduced without permission from Air Power Over Europe*, by John Herington. Australian War Memorial, 1963.*

To No. 1658 Conversion Unit, Riccall, Yorkshire (Course 38)

On completion of the Battle Course we were posted to the Conversion Unit located at Riccall about nine miles south of York. This was a wartime station with the buildings well dispersed, which required a lot of walking to attend the various venues.

It was summer time with two hours of daylight saving, which made for very long evenings. It was still light at midnight.

There was a shop about two miles from the station that served good fish and chips. Many of us used to take the walk to this shop for a supper of fish and chips.

It was here that we learnt how to fly the large four-engine Halifax II heavy bomber powered by Rolls-Royce Merlin engines.

Operation of these aircraft required an additional crew member in the way of a flight engineer. On the arrival of the all-English flight engineers, I met a mature fellow aged about forty with a good sense of humour who had been an industrial chemist. He appeared to have a good grasp of the duties required of him and I felt confident of his ability. His name was Jack Lord. He was married with a 12 year old son and lived in Halifax.

A day’s leave gave us the opportunity to visit the city of Leeds.

On another 24 hours leave Jack Lord invited me to spend the time with him and his family at his home. We did an interesting sight seeing walk around Halifax, which included a view of the ancient gibbet. Nearing the end of the walk we visited a relatively new pub. The entrance to the pub was through two glass doors in which were etched the scenes and words of the famous Yorkshire folk lore song *On Ilkla Moor Baht 'At*.

I quickly became conversant with the operation of the Halifax aircraft and found them good to fly. We participated in a range of exercises, which gave all crew members the opportunity to practise their skills.

It was at Riccall that we became aware of the might of Bomber Command as the station appeared to be located under the flight path of many of No. 4 Group and No. 6 Group Squadrons when on operations. I clearly remember taking it easy after a hard day’s work, lying on the grass on a warm evening and watching the hundreds of Halifaxes and Lancasters heading towards the Continent. The tremendous throb of hundreds of engines vibrated the atmosphere and even the ground on which I was resting. While knowing full well that they were our own aircraft, it was nevertheless an awe inspiring experience and I wondered about the enemy’s reaction when, in a short time, this inexorable force unleashed its tremendous powers of destruction.

LIE IN THE DARK AND LISTEN

Lie in the dark and listen.
It's clear tonight so they're flying high,
Hundreds of them, thousands perhaps,
Riding the icy, moonlit sky.
Men, machinery, bombs and maps,
Altimeters and guns and charts,
Coffee, sandwiches, fleece-lined boots,
Bones and muscles and minds and hearts,
English saplings with English roots
Deep in the earth they've left below.
Lie in the dark and let them go;
Lie in the dark and listen.

Lie in the dark and listen.
They're going over in waves and waves
High above villages, hills and streams,
Country churches and little graves
And little citizen's worried dreams;
Very soon they'll have reached the bays
And cliffs and sands where they used to be
Taken for summer holidays.
Lie in the dark and let them go
Theirs is a world we'll never know.
Lie in the dark and listen.

Lie in the dark and listen.
City magnates and steel contractors,
Factory workers and politicians
Soft hysterical little actors,
Ballet dancers, reserved musicians,
Safe in your warm civilian beds.
Count your profits and count your sheep
Life is passing above your heads,
Just turn over and try to sleep.
Lie in the dark and let them go;
There's one debt you'll forever owe,
Lie in the dark and listen.

Noël Coward

The final flying exercise at Riccall was a cross-country night flight of some five hours duration on 17th July, 1944. Taking off in darkness with poor visibility we were immediately enveloped in dense cloud, which necessitated flying on instruments only during the whole of the climb until breaking out of the cloud at a height of 16,000 feet. It certainly was an extraordinary exercise in instrument flying.

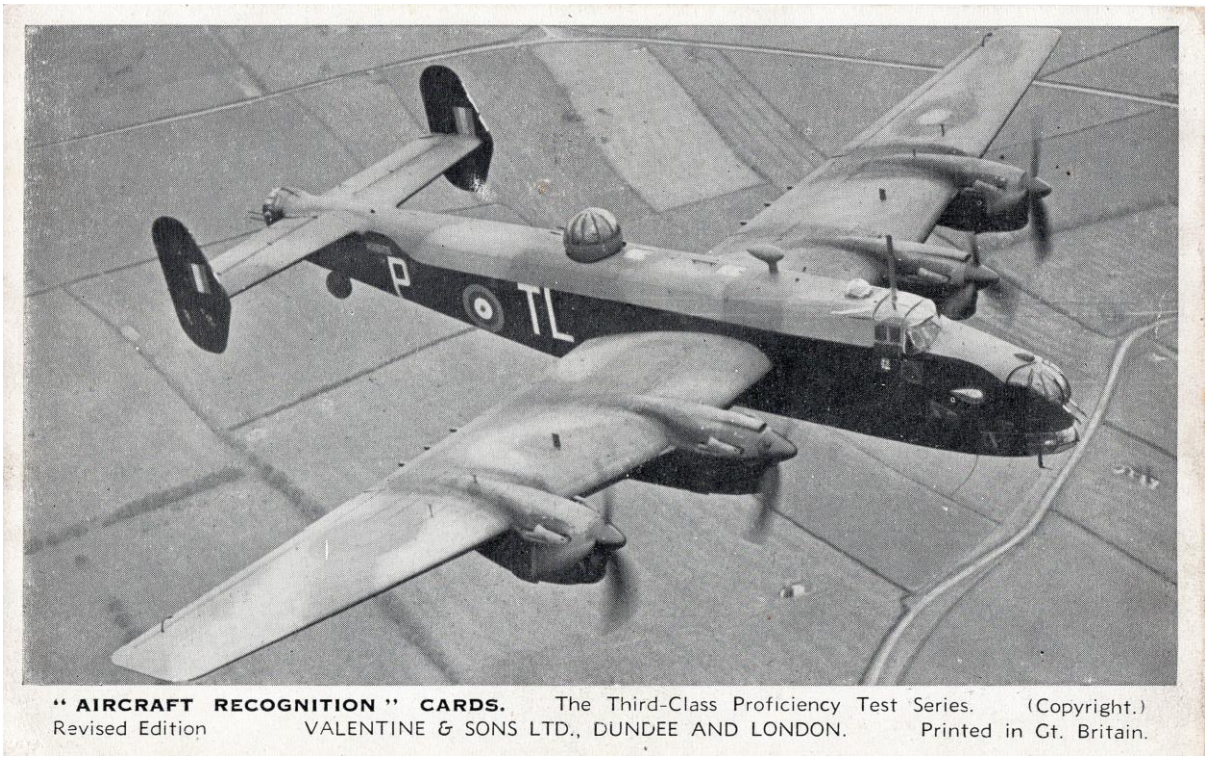

P TL
" AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION " CARDS. The Third-Class Proficiency Test Series. (Copyright.)
Revised Edition VALENTINE & SONS LTD., DUNDEE AND LONDON. Printed in Gt. Britain.

Figure 43: Handley-Page Halifax II.

Figure 44: Handley-Page Halifax BII Series I. Photo: Charles E. Brown, FRS, FIIP.

It was while I was at Riccall that a school mate, who had attended Manifold Public School at Bentley, NSW lost his life on an operation with the RAF. He was Pilot Officer (P/O) Edward James (Teddie) Holmes born at Casino, NSW on 15th October, 1922. He was serving with 104 RAF Squadron based at Foggia, near the east coast of Italy. On the night of 1st – 2nd July, 1944 he as pilot and his crew flying a Wellington X MF 137 were detailed to carry out a "gardening operation" on the Danube River between Pancsova and Grocka in Yugoslavia. Taking off from Foggia Main Aerodrome at 21:01 on 1st July, 1944 and on reaching the target area the aircraft was caught in anti-aircraft fire from both sides of the Danube. The aircraft crashed and exploded in a maize field at 22:00, 50 yards from the north bank (Pansevo side) and 200 yards east of the Pansevo Belgrade road near Belgrade. The explosion blew a crater 30 feet in diameter. All five crew members were killed and their remains were buried in Belgrade BE Cemetery.

Five German soldiers were killed by a mine after the crash.

It would have taken a flying time of about two hours for the Wellington to reach the target area. Assuming that the squadron was operating on an hour of daylight saving time and the report of the crash was in local Yugoslav time, this would give the approximate flying time of two hours and explains the reason for the time of only 59 minutes between the officially reported times of take-off and crash.

To 578 RAF Squadron, Burn, Yorkshire

While we had been asked to nominate an operational squadron to which we would wish to be posted there was little chance of one's wish being satisfied. Information about squadrons was

extremely limited as nothing was published about their activities so one's nomination was based mainly on rumour. In the end it probably made little difference to which squadron one was posted. I believe we were fortunate in being posted to 578 Squadron with its outstanding leader and its reputation in No. 4 Group for accurate bombing, earning it the sobriquet of "The aiming point Squadron". The Squadron's motto was "Accuracy".

Figure 45: The Badge of 578 Squadron.

In August, 1944, Wing Commander A.G.T. James, OBE took over command of 578 Squadron. Determined to create a fitting emblem to incorporate the maxim "Accuracy", which had been established by his predecessor, he asked his father, an academic specialising in Greek studies, whether there was a Greek symbol for accuracy. He advised of a Greek archery competition in which the last but one to shoot an arrow hit the bull's eye. Determined to improve on that, the last archer split the previous arrow in half! The Wing Commander's wife drew a picture of the proposed badge and motto, which was submitted first to the Inspector of Royal Air Force Badges and, on his acceptance, then to the College of Arms. The design was sanctioned by King George VI in March, 1945, the month during which the Squadron completed all operational flying commitments and disbanded.

We completed the conversion course and the posting we had been training and waiting so long for came at last with effect from 22nd July, 1944.

It was noticeable immediately on arrival at this operational station the distinctly different attitude of the staff towards the aircrew personnel. The staff made every effort to make us feel welcome and to assist us in every way possible. There is no doubt that they were well aware of the risks and dangers that we faced on operations and they had experienced the tragic loss of aircrews and

aircraft. This attitude was very heartening and contrasted sharply with what we had previously experienced during training. They made us feel like VIPs.

We settled in quickly to this station built in wartime with its widely dispersed facilities necessitating the use of bicycles to get around. We were attached to "A" Flight under Acting Command of Lieutenant J.L. Christenson, who was an American Air Force pilot who had somehow found himself operating with 578 Squadron.

It quickly became obvious to us that this station was different from any that we had been on before. There was a great feeling of friendliness, optimism and enthusiasm which, I believe, was in no small measure due to the outstanding leadership of Wing Commander D.S.S. Wilkerson.

A contributing factor to the high morale and great camaraderie was the diverse range of nationalities represented on the Squadron, even including an American.

AIRMEN FROM OVERSEAS

Who are these that come from the ends of the oceans
Coming as the swallows come out of the South
In the glory of Spring? They are come among us
With purpose in the eyes, with a smile on the mouth.

These are they who have left the familiar faces,
Sights, sounds and scent of familiar land,
Taking no care for security promised aforetime,
Sweetness of home and the future hope had planned.

A lode-star has drawn them; Britain, standing alone
Clear in the darkness, not to be overcome,
Though the huge masses of hate are hurled against her,
Wherever the spirit of freedom breathes, is Home.

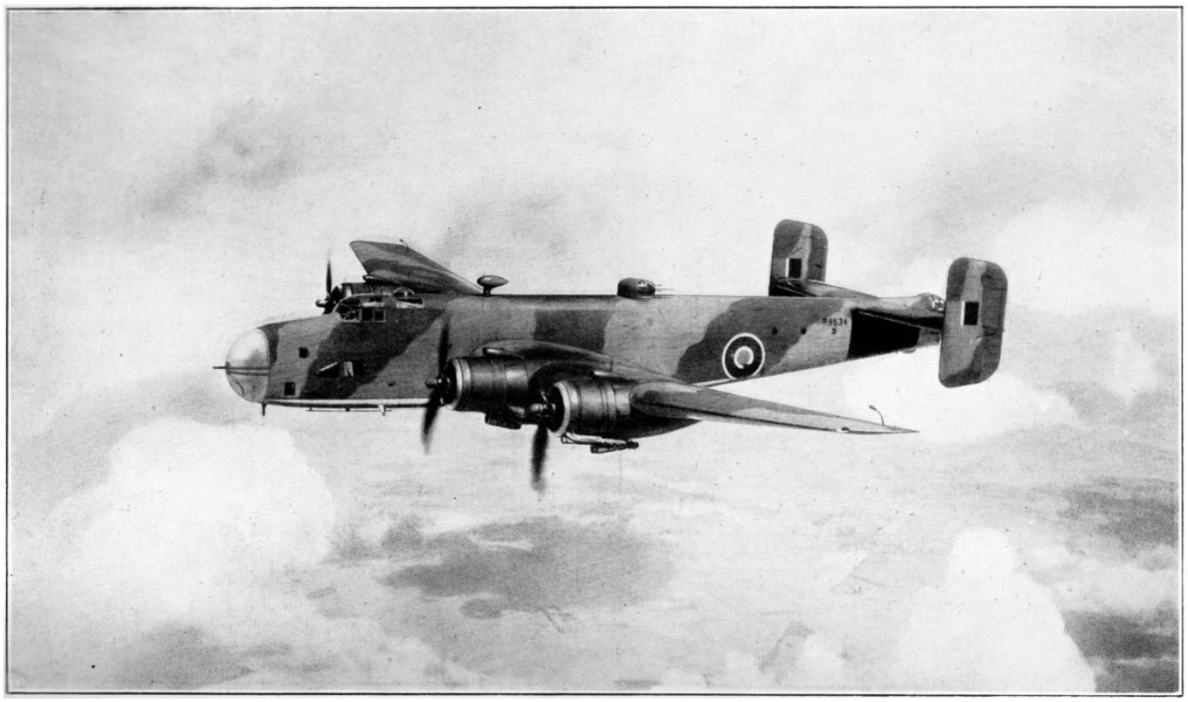
Soon they are joined with incomparable comrades,
Britain's flower and Britain's pride,
Against all odds, despising the boastful Terror,
On joyous wings in the ways of the wind they ride.

From afar they battle for our ancient island,
Soaring and pouncing, masters of the skies.
They are heard in the night by lands betrayed and captive
And a throbbing of hope to their thunder-throb replies.
To dare incredible things, from the ends of the ocean
They are coming and coming, over the perilous seas,
How shall we hail them? Truly there are no words
And no song worthy of these.

Laurence Binyon

During our time at Burn the crew visited Doncaster, which was not very far away and met Charlie Walker's parents. On another short leave occasion I accepted Frank Smith's invitation to visit his home and meet his parents in Nottingham.

The Squadron was equipped with the Halifax B III aircraft. This aircraft, with its cleaner lines incorporating many modifications, including redesigned tail fins and fitted with Hercules XVI radial engines, which were more powerful than the Merlins used in the Mark II aircraft, resulted in a virtually new type of aeroplane far superior to its predecessors. It was a good aircraft to fly and could stand a lot of punishment.



HALIFAX III

Figure 46: Halifax III picture from Pilot's and Flight Engineer's Notes *booklet.*

Several pictures of the instruments and cabin interior are reproduced from the *Pilot's and Flight Engineer's Notes* booklet for the Halifax III in an Appendix at p.158.

On 25th July, 1944, I with my crew did the conversion flight of 50 minutes with F/O R.G. Heuston in LK-B, after which I made a solo flight of 1 hour 15 minutes with my crew. Later that day I and my crew did a cross-country flight when the hydraulic line burst, resulting in the loss of brake pressure, which necessitated landing at the emergency airfield at Carnaby, where we stayed overnight while the aircraft was repaired, returning to Burn in the morning.

On 27th July, we took off in LK-E and flew out over the North Sea to give the gunner some practice in what was referred to as air to sea firing. This exercise always made the gunners happy and boosted their morale.

The 30th July, 1944 was an important day for the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander David S.S. Wilkerson, DSO, DFC, RAFVR, and for me. While it was the CO's final operation with

578 Squadron, it was my first. I went as Second Pilot with Flight Lieutenant Geoff E. Sanders and his crew in LK-E, LL584 on an early morning army co-operation mission to Battle Area G near the Normandy village of Villers-Bocage, an area comprising woodland and small fields. The hedgerows, many of which were centuries old, were so thick in places to resist even bulldozers. With narrow roads between the stout and tall hedgerows, this was just the terrain in which tanks could so easily be ambushed. It was here that the 7th Armoured Division fought a bloody and inconclusive tank battle with the German Panzer Lehr Division.

Because of low cloud making target identification difficult and with the close proximity of Allied troops, the Master Bomber ordered the mission to be abandoned. The CO who had flown beneath the cloud base was heard talking to the Master Bomber, offering to carry on with the mission as he could see the aiming point but this action was forbidden.

With no apparent enemy action and no bombing the operation was an anti-climax for me.

The next day my crew and I went over to 51 RAF Squadron at Snaith, which was not very far away, to ferry back to Burn a brand new aircraft, LK-Ā, serial number LW556. This aircraft handled beautifully.

My feelings at this time were ably expressed in the following extract from a letter to my mother dated, 31st July, 1944, "I think this is about the best station I have been on. Everybody is willing to help us in every way. It is just like one big happy family and I am enjoying it very much."

On 31st July, US troops broke through the German lines around the Normandy beachhead, opening the way to liberating the rest of France. However, in the face of continuing stiff opposition by the German Army, it required a major effort by all of the Allied forces to achieve that objective and a lot of fighting still had to be done before the final victory.

Squadron life was completely different to that previously experienced. Depending on the exigencies of the war effort against the enemy we were liable to be called on at any hour of the day or night to participate in operations. However, weather conditions played a significant role in the mounting and conduct of operations, especially in the proposed target area.

We lived in a continual state of expectancy and anticipation wondering when the next call for operations would be made and what and where the target might be.

A typical operational day would start with an announcement over the Tannoy (public address system), that all aircrews would report for briefing at a specified time and that no one was to leave the station. The briefing room was of sufficient size to accommodate the aircrew personnel. The end wall facing the audience held a large map of the UK and Europe on which were depicted both friendly and enemy fortified areas together with the delineated route to and from the target. On entering the briefing room the map was completely covered by a curtain and was only exposed after the officer carrying out the briefing announced the name of the target and the specific objective.

Briefing information included time to start engines, taxi out and take off, time for the squadron to leave the base area and the time slot for bombing the target. Also specified were the courses to be flown together with the heights and speeds, the colours of the Target Indicators (TIs) on which we were to bomb and various code words governing the operation. There were code words which could come into effect over the target area depending on prevailing conditions and would be used by the Pathfinder Force's Master Bomber. There were always code words for our base station and for the main-force, which were changed for every operation. The code words for the bombers or main-force were often in the macho idiom whereas our base station was often of a feminine or benign nature. A good example of this was on an operation I did where the code for the main-force was "Big Boy" and "Hot Stuff" designated the home base.

The briefing advised us of the composition of the bomb load, which depended on the type of target to be attacked.

While considerable attention was given to speeds, heights and timing, which was aimed at keeping the squadron aircraft as close together as possible and to deliver a concentrated attack in the allotted time, it was also aimed at carrying out the operation as economically as possible regarding fuel consumption.

The Halifax B III had a theoretical fuel consumption of 0.93 miles per gallon. Various factors influenced fuel consumption such as day or night flying, atmospherics, air temperature, humidity, bomb load, airspeed, length of climb and height, age and condition of engines and engine control. Operating under wartime conditions it was virtually impossible to obtain the theoretical fuel consumption rate, however, a rate between 0.89 to 0.92 mpg was often achieved.

At the briefing we pilots were issued with captains-of-aircraft maps on which we drew the routes to and from the target, and noted times, airspeeds, heights, directions, "H" hour and TI colours and code words. We also marked in the fortified areas both friendly and hostile.

After the general briefing the various crew members attended specialist briefings relative to their duties.

If a meal was necessary prior to take-off a time was specified when it would be available. This meal, often referred to as "The Last Supper" consisted of a fried egg, a slice of bacon and a piece of fried bread.

After the meal we would go to the locker room and don our flying gear and when ready a Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) driver would pick us up in a truck and take us to our aircraft located at its designated dispersal point.

While I did a ground check of the aircraft to see that everything was in order and conferred with the ground staff, the rest of the crew would climb aboard and settle into their respective positions and check equipment.

Prior to our arrival the armourers would have armed the aircraft with its specified bomb load and replenished the gun turrets with ammunition. From a tanker the fuelers would have refuelled the aircraft with 100 octane petrol.

With the pilot at the controls in the cockpit the engines were started with the assistance of the ground staff.

Before each engine was started the propeller had to be hand turned through two full revolutions to disperse any oil that may have accumulated in the cylinders to prevent engine damage.

The aircraft was plugged into a mobile power supply and the engines started in a standard order. As each engine was started it was run up to full power and the magneto switch activated. A drop of 50 rpm. required the engine to be stopped and examined.

With all engines running smoothly, it was time to taxi out. With a wave of his hand the pilot signalled the ground staff to remove the wheel chocks. He then carefully controlled the aircraft to take it along the sealed perimeter track where it joined other aircraft heading for the take-off runway.

With the bomb aimer occupying the seat adjacent to the pilot to assist with the take-off, other crew members would take up seats in the rest position amidship. However, my rear gunner always remained in his gun turret during take-off.

On receipt of a green light from the control tower, (radio silence was strictly observed) the aircraft was moved onto the runway, the flaps were lowered to the specified degrees to assist the take-off, it was then time to take-off.

The pilot now faced a very vulnerable situation.

While the runway had been selected according to the general direction of the head wind, it would be fortunate if the wind was in the most desirable direction with the consequence that the pilot had to take into account any variation in wind direction.

With this large aircraft carrying a bomb load of anything up to 12,000 lb comprising high explosives and incendiaries and at least 1,806 gallons of high-octane fuel and a possible all-up weight of 63,000 lb there was always the possibility that a tyre would burst or an engine fail. Also this aircraft had an inherent tendency to swing to the right during take-off. Added to this situation there was also the ever-present possibility that one could be attacked by an intruding enemy aircraft.

Releasing the brakes the pilot moved the four throttle levers forward with his right hand to the gate. The gate was a thin silver-coloured copper wire threaded through a series of holes in the structure that held the throttles. If in an emergency extra power was required the throttles could be pushed through the fine wire.

As the aircraft gradually gained speed the control column (stick) was moved forward with the objective of lifting the tail-plane off the runway. When that was achieved the stick was eased

back to maintain the aircraft in a level state until flying speed was achieved, all the time maintaining direction by the use of throttles and rudders. On reaching flying speed the stick was eased back and the aircraft lifted off the runway. The undercarriage was immediately raised by the pilot pulling the undercarriage lever.

At 100 feet the bomb aimer operated the lever to close the flaps.

At 300 feet the pilot throttled back the engines to the power required for climbing, at the same time synchronising the revolutions of the engines to produce a smooth rhythmic sound. It was then time to turn onto the required course.

With all senses fully alert for every possible dangerous contingency there was nothing to equal the tension and excitement of controlling this huge fully-laden plane as it hurtled down the runway. The forces of inertia forced one back into one's seat following the great surge of power as the throttles released 6,600 horsepower from the four powerful Hercules engines accompanied by their mighty roar. No matter how often it was done, it was with a great deal of satisfaction and a sense of achievement to complete a successful take-off.

Into Battle

We had joined the Squadron during the period known as "The Battle of Normandy", from 5th – 6th June to 16th August, 1944.

This period began with the Allied landings in the Normandy area and the ensuing intense battles by the Allied forces against the German defenders. Bomber Command was called on to support the Allied Armies and to hinder the German defence by bombing railway marshalling yards, German fighter airfields in the occupied countries and the destruction of synthetic oil plants in the Ruhr. German cities were also attacked. Following the German V-1 attacks against London, which began on 13th June, Bomber Command was called on to destroy their launching sites and supply depots.

The men of Bomber Command played their part in the events of those historic weeks. For the bomber crews it was a time of almost unbelievable intensity, variety and interest. Operations during this period consisted of a multitude of small- and medium-sized raids. The planners never worked harder, nor did the aircrews and ground staff. Sometimes aircrews flew two sorties in 24 hours. By day they might be bombing targets only a few yards from the battle lines in Normandy; a few hours later they could be bombing an oil refinery in the Ruhr. Bomber Command flew approximately the same number of sorties in an average week during this period – more than 5,000 sorties – as in the first nine months of the war! No one who flew in those weeks and survived will ever forget them.

After all the study, training and hard work, which as far as pilots were concerned I believe was equivalent to a one-to-two-year university course, we had reached the peak of that effort. The authorities believed we were fit for battle. I was fully confident of my ability to face the enemy and I had every confidence that my crew would measure up to the test.

Operation 1: 1st August, 1944

Our first operation as a crew was on 1st August, 1944 when we were briefed to attack the flying bomb site at Anderbelck in German occupied France.

Twenty-six 578 Squadron aircraft were detailed to attack this target. We took off at 19:35 in LK-"A" LL843 with a bomb load of 9,000 lb. However, on approaching the target the Master Bomber cancelled the operation due to low cloud obscuring the target. We encountered some flak in the Dunkirk area but didn't receive any damage. It was our first experience of being shot at. We jettisoned our bombs in the sea. The bombs were dropped safe (unarmed) so as not to explode on landing. We landed at 22:55 after 3 hours 20 minutes. The sortie was a gentle way of experiencing an operation where the danger had been at a low level while realising the actual problems that had to be faced to achieve success. While it was disappointing that the Master Bomber had seen fit to cancel the operation at the target, it still counted as an official operation as far as our tour of operations was concerned.

This day 777 aircraft consisting of 385 Lancasters, 324 Halifaxes, 67 Mosquitoes and one Lightning had been detailed to attack various flying bomb sites but only 79 aircraft were able to bomb due to bad weather conditions over the targets. No aircraft were lost.

The operation was expensive for Bomber Command in the consumption of fuel and the jettisoning of bombs for little gain due to adverse weather conditions. No doubt at the planning stage the weather forecast had looked promising but hours later when the operation was under way the situation had deteriorated and there was no way that the situation in enemy occupied territory could have been predicted with certainty. Weather forecasting is not an exact science so there were bound to be occasions when weather conditions in particular circumstances prevented or halted the attack.

When crews were assigned to operations each pilot's name was listed on the blackboard in the Battle Order for the scheduled operation. Some person with a sense of humour used to write an amusing remark after each name. In our case we were written up as "Cockerill and his Bantams". No doubt this was because of my name and the fact that, with the exception of the mid-upper gunner, I was the tallest member of my crew. We were amused by this and the other remarks.

Debriefing

Immediately after each operation the captain and his crew were required to attend a debriefing session with an Intelligence Officer, who was often a WAAF. We reported on such matters as weather conditions including types of clouds, the enemy's defences regarding decoys, the intensity of flak and searchlights, any enemy fighter activity, visibility of the aiming point in the target area, whether the Master Bomber was heard, any instructions given by the Master Bomber, the bombing height, airspeed, the magnetic compass bearing, the time of bombing, ground marker or sky marker and colours and position of the marker, any aircraft being shot down and if any crew members had escaped by parachute from such aircraft and if any of one's crew had been killed or injured. In addition the ground staff would have to be given details of any

malfunction of the aircraft and its equipment requiring rectification and the condition of the aircraft on its return.

Parachutes and other safety equipment would have to be returned to the Safety Equipment Section and foreign currency returned. All these matters would take time and by the time crews had their Ops breakfast something like 10 to 12 hours could have passed since their previous meal.

Operation 2: 3rd August, 1944

On 2nd August, 1944, 578 Squadron was called to provide 10 aircraft to attack a flying bomb site at Forêt de Nieppe in France, however, we were not required to participate in this operation. All of our aircraft returned to base. This day 394 aircraft attacked a flying bomb launching site and three supply depots. Two Lancasters of 5 Group were lost.

We were one of 21 aircraft of 578 Squadron detailed to attack the flying bomb depot at L'Isle-Adam, Bois de Cassan near Paris on 3rd August. Industrial haze obscured our view of Paris. After taking off at 11:30 in LK "B̄" LL585 with a bomb load of 6,500 lb comprising 4 x 500 lb MC (Medium Capacity) and 9 x 500 lb GP (General Purpose) bombs we successfully attacked the target by bombing the centre of the bombing concentration at 14:02:30 from a height of 15,000 feet, while encountering what was termed moderate flak in the target area but fortunately we didn't receive any damage. All flak was very dangerous and in our reporting at debriefing it was classed as slight to intense depending on the number of shells bursting in the area through which we had to fly. After leaving the target areas and before reaching the vicinity of Rouen the rear gunner called me up on the intercom stating that he could see a fellow riding a motorbike along a road and could he shoot him. Now the rear gunner was a good marksman and in his turret with four machine guns that could fire many hundreds of rounds a minute there was a good chance that if he fired at the rider he would kill him. It was most likely that the rider was a German, however, there was the possibility that he could be a Frenchman. I clearly remember my answer being, "No, he could be a poor bloody Frenchman." So the life of a motorbike rider in France was spared that day due to my decision.

Near the outskirts of Rouen a cheeky ack-ack gunner fired two shells at us. The shells exploded at our height but about 150 yards off our left wing-tip. We landed back at base at 16:05 after a flight of 4 hours 35 minutes.

Two of our crews returned early because of engine troubles. F/O E.R. Bowden and his crew in LK "M", NA586 had a disconcerting experience in the target area when a bomb dropped from a Lancaster made a great hole in the starboard wing between the two engines. Fortunately the bomb didn't explode and they were able to return to base.

On this operation our outward and return courses took us not far west of London, which enabled us to see the tethered balloons over the city, which were part of the anti-aircraft defence system. The balloons were tethered at heights ranging from 5,000 to 6,500 feet. The balloons had wire ropes hanging from them, which were intended to damage any enemy aircraft that attempted a low-level attack on the city.

Figure 47: Balloon Barrage over London (Public Domain).

On this day the Squadron participated in a second operation requiring 10 aircraft to attack the flying bomb supply depot at Forêt de Nieppe. P/O R. Fox and his crew when outward bound on this operation had to bale out of their aircraft LK "R", LK846 near East Beccles, Suffolk when it became uncontrollable.

This day 1,114 aircraft – 601 Lancasters, 492 Halifaxes and 21 Mosquitoes – carried out major raids on flying bomb stores at Bois de Cassan, Forêt de Nieppe and Trossy St. Maximin. All raids were successful. Six Lancasters were lost.

4th August, 1944. The Squadron was stood down after being detailed for operations, which were later cancelled.

Operation 3: 5th August, 1944

5th August, 1944. Target – flying bomb storage depot – Forêt de Nieppe.

We took part in this operation when twenty-five 578 aircraft took off. Our aircraft LK "H", LK809 was fitted with Monica 3. This tail-mounted radar device gave warning of night fighters approaching from the rear. On 15th July, 1944 a Ju 88 Luftwaffe night fighter was captured when it landed in error at RAF Woodbridge. This aircraft was fitted with a radar device, code named Flensburg, which when tested showed that it could home on Monica from a distance of 50 miles. Tests on the various devices in this aircraft took a considerable period of time and eventually orders were issued for the removal of Monica equipment from all main force aircraft. Aircraft in 100 Radio Countermeasures (RCM) Group retained the Monica equipment.

Our bomb load was 9,000 lb comprising 6 x 500 lb MC and 12 x 500 lb GP bombs. At the target we bombed the centre of the smoke as directed by the Master Bomber at 13:10:30 from a height of 14,900 feet. With good bombing conditions crews reported accurate bombing of the target. After a flight of 3 hours 50 minutes we landed at 14:55, classing the trip as quiet.

742 aircraft – 469 Halifaxes, 257 Lancasters and 16 Mosquitoes – attacked Forêt de Nieppe and St. Leu d'Esserent flying bomb storage sites. One Halifax was lost from the St. Leu d'Esserent raid.

Operation 4: 6th August, 1944

6th August, 1944. Target – railway marshalling yards – Hazebrouck, France.

Twenty-four Squadron 578 aircraft took off on this operation. Our aircraft was LK "H", LK809 with a bomb load of 8,000 lb comprising 16 x 500 lb GP bombs. On arrival at the target we bombed on the yellow markers as directed by the Master Bomber at 21:01 from 10,200 feet. The target was clearly seen resulting in very accurate bombing.

On every occasion after the bombs were dropped the aircraft would immediately gain 200 feet in height. Squadron aircraft were fitted with cameras, which upon release of the bombs triggered the camera to take a series of four photos. The photos didn't record the actual bomb bursts but from what was photographed the Intelligence Section could calculate where the bombs would have landed and how close they would have been to the aiming point, that is, the target as indicated by the TIs dropped by the Pathfinder Force. The bomb bursts weren't photographed because the speed of the aircraft was greater than the speed of the falling bombs. After dropping the bombs we were required to maintain the compass bearing on which we bombed to allow the camera to take the photos, which took about 30 seconds. With flak bursting around us this seemed like an interminable time. This act put us in imminent danger because on approaching the target the Bomb Aimer required the aircraft to be held on a steady and accurate course so that he could line up the target in the cross-wires of the bombsight. Flying straight and level on a set course in the target area for several minutes provided an opportunity for the enemy gunners to accurately home on an aircraft with their radar predictors directing their guns.

When on approaching the target the TIs appeared in the bombsight the bomb aimer would give the order, "Bomb doors open" for the pilot. The bomb aimer would then instruct the pilot with a series of directions such as, "left, left, steady, right a bit, steady, steady" and when the target appeared in the cross-wires he would press the bomb release button and announce, "bombs gone". The bombs left the aircraft in a pre-set sequential order. The pilot then operated the lever that closed the bomb doors after which there was a small increase in airspeed.

There was some flak near the target and in the Dunkirk area. A piece of flak caused slight damage to the rear gun-turret. We returned to base at 22:50 after a flight of 3 hours 30 minutes. This was another daylight operation and it must be remembered that the country was operating on two hours of daylight saving time, which was ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

Photographs taken at the time of bombing indicated good results, which were later confirmed by photos taken by the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit (PRU).

62 aircraft – 51 Halifaxes, 6 Lancasters and 5 Mosquitoes – of 4 and 8 Groups attacked this target. One Halifax was lost.

Operation 5: 7th August, 1944

7th August, 1944. Target – code named Totaliser 3. A night attack in support of the Army at St. Sylvain in the Caen battle area, France.

Twenty 578 Squadron aircraft were detailed for this operation. Our aircraft was LK "H", LK809. We took off at 21:05 with a bomb load of 12,000 lb comprising 9 x 1,000 lb MC and 6 x 500 lb GP bombs. As we approached the target the Master Bomber cancelled the operation due to the fact that the Pathfinder Force had dropped the TIs too close to the positions held by the Allied Armies. I remember clearly the Master Bomber repeatedly frantically shouting instructions over radio telephony (R/T) to all crews, "Do not drop your bombs!!"

We jettisoned our bombs in the sea and landed back at base at 00:55 after a flight of 3 hours 50 minutes.

Other Army support raids with different aiming points were scheduled for this night attack on German strong points.

Ten Lancasters were lost, seven to fighters.

8th August, 1944. Operations ordered but later cancelled.

Operation 6: 9th August, 1944

9th August, 1944. Target – fuel dump – Forêt de Mornal, France.

Twenty-four 578 aircraft were detailed to attack this target.

We took off at 11:15 in LK "H", LK809 with a bomb load of 12,000 lb.

While flying at 10,000 feet in good weather conditions over the North Sea the propeller on the starboard inner engine suddenly started to rotate at very high speed. I immediately exercised the standard procedure in this situation of stopping the engine and feathering the propeller. This was what was called a "coring problem" caused by a rapid increase in engine oil viscosity restricting its flow through the oil cooler to lubricate the engine. The engine had to be stopped immediately to prevent it seizing up. An engine closed down for this reason was not allowed to be restarted while airborne.

Loss of an engine reduced our airspeed, which meant that we were unable to keep up with the main force, at the same time we were losing height at the rate of 200 feet a minute. Making some quick mental calculations I figured that if we continued with the operation we would be at a very low altitude over the target and on our own with the possibility that other engines could fail thus putting my crew and aircraft in serious jeopardy. I decided to abandon the operation and jettison the bombs in the sea. The crew agreed with my decision. When this happened we were approximately half-way between the English coast and the enemy coast at 2° 6" E longitude and 51° 30" N latitude. After jettisoning the bombs I turned the aircraft around and flew the reciprocal course back to base. I instructed the wireless operator to send a coded message to base informing them of our problem. On arrival at our base fire engines were standing by but they weren't needed as I made a good safe landing at 14:20 after a flight of 3 hours 5 minutes.

10th August, 1944. Operations ordered but later cancelled.

Operation 7: 11th August, 1944

11th August, 1944. Target – railway marshalling yards – Somain, France.

Twenty-eight 578 aircraft were detailed for this Bomber Command operation to disrupt the enemy's transport system.

We took off at 13:45 in LK "Ā", LW556, the new aircraft that we had ferried from Snaith, with a bomb load of 12,000 lb.

Some flak was met on the way to the target. We successfully bombed the target and returned safely to base landing at 17:45 after a flight of 4 hours. In our experience it was considered a quiet trip.

There was one report of fighter action. A Halifax was reported to have been hit by bombs from another aircraft over the target. The aircraft disintegrated and it was reported that only three crewmen baled out.

459 aircraft – 270 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes and 20 Mosquitoes from 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups attacked three railway yards and one bridge. Forces of between 133 and 142 aircraft attacked Douai, Lens and Somain. The bombing of these targets started well but ground features rapidly became covered by smoke and dust. One Halifax was lost on the Somain raid. On this day 49 aircraft attacked the Étaples railway bridge without loss and claimed direct hits on the bridge.

Leaflets

On some operations against Germany we were required to drop propaganda leaflets. Information in the leaflets covered such subjects as German POWs and how well they were looked after, the effective response to Hitler's V weapons, and the futility of continuing the war against the Allied forces. It was the wireless operator's job to toss out the leaflets through the forward hatch at pre-determined locations.

Window

Window was the code name for a very thin piece of aluminium foil 26.5 cm long by 1 cm wide glued to a very thin piece of paper. Window was designed to confuse the German defences by swamping their radar screens as the strips of foil produced responses similar to those of aircraft. In the early days of its use it was extremely effective in defending our bombers. This caused the Germans to work very hard to develop counter measures, which they did. However, the continued use of Window posed problems for the enemy.

Aircraft participating in an operation were supplied with large bundles of Window and it was the wireless operator's job to toss out specific quantities commencing at pre-determined points along the bomber's path to the target.

An die deutsche Frau!

Deutschland selbst wird nun zum Kriegsschauplatz. Von jetzt an wird jede Bombe und jede Granate auf deutschem Boden explodieren. Deutsches Blut wird deutsche Erde tränken. Städte, Dörfer und Felder werden in Rauch und Flammen aufgehen. So wollen es Hitler und seine Partei-Fanatiker.

Willst Du den Krieg im Lande?

Frage den heimkehrenden deutschen Soldaten,
ob persönlicher Opfermut und Heldentum die anglo-amerikanische Kriegsmaschine zum Stehen bringen können.

Frage den heimkehrenden deutschen Soldaten,
ob er für deutsche Frauen und Kinder das gleiche Los wünscht wie das der Zivilbevölkerung der Normandie, Italiens und Russlands.

Frage den heimkehrenden deutschen Soldaten,
ob er will, dass sein Heimatort so aussieht, wie die zerschossenen Dörfer und Städte der Normandie, Italiens und Russlands.

Die Treue des deutschen Soldaten gehört nicht der bankrotten Partei, sondern Dir, deutsche Frau, Deinen Kindern und der Heimat. Und Du kannst den deutschen Soldaten, Deine Kinder und die Heimat vor sinnloser Vernichtung bewahren, wenn Du forderst:

SCHLUSS!

WG 9

Deutsche Frau, Du hast das Wort!

Das ist das sechste Kriegsjahr. Der deutsche Soldat ist zurückgekehrt. Er hat Unmenschliches erduldet auf den Schlachtfeldern Russlands, den Wüsten Afrikas, unter dem Trommelfeuer der Alliierten in Italien und dem Bombenhagel an der Westfront. Aufs neue, auf Heimatboden, soll er nun den Kampf gegen die ungeheure Übermacht der anglo-amerikanischen Kriegsmaschine aufnehmen. Ohne genügend Panzer und Luftwaffe. Du, deutsche Frau, hast die Macht, unendliches Leid, Schrecken und Tod zu verhüten. Sage dem heimgekehrten deutschen Soldaten:

- *Dass Du diesen sinnlosen letzten Widerstand nicht willst.*
- *Dass Du nicht willst, dass Deine Städte und Dörfer in Grund und Boden geschossen werden.*
- *Dass Du genug hast von der SS und der Partei, die die Zerstörung der Heimat befehlen, nur um sich selber noch ein paar Tage länger im Sattel zu halten.*
- *Dass darum Soldatentreue ausschliesslich dem Volke gehört.*
- *Dass dieses Volk verlangt:*

Schluss mit dem Krieg!

Weg mit den Kriegsverlängerern!

Sofortfriede und Wiederaufbau Deutschlands!

To the German Woman!

Germany itself now becomes a theatre of war. From now on, every bomb and every grenade will explode on German soil. German blood will soak German soil. Cities, villages and fields will go up in smoke and flames. This is what Hitler and his party fanatics want.

Do you want war in the country?

Ask the returning German soldiers,
whether personal sacrifice and heroism can bring the Anglo-American war machine to a halt.

Ask the returning German soldiers,
whether they want German women and children to have the same fate as that of the civilian population of Normandy, Italy and Russia.

Ask the returning German soldiers,
whether he wants his hometown to look like the shot-up villages and towns of Normandy, Italy and Russia.

The loyalty of the German soldier does not belong to the bankrupt party, but to you, German woman, your children and to the homeland. And you can protect the German soldier, your children, and the homeland from senseless annihilation if you demand:

ENOUGH!

German Woman, You have the Word!

This is the sixth year of the war. The German soldier has returned. He has endured inhuman suffering on the battlefields of Russia, the deserts of Africa, under the relentless fire of the Allies in Italy, and the rain of bombs on the Western Front. Again, on home soil, he is to take up the fight against the overwhelming power of the Anglo-American war machine. Without sufficient tanks and air force. You, German woman, have the power to prevent infinite suffering, terror, and death. Tell the returning German soldier:

- *That you don't want this senseless last resistance.*
- *That you don't want your cities and villages to be shot into the ground.*
- *That you have had enough of the SS and the Party, who order the destruction of the homeland just to keep yourself in the saddle for a few days longer.*
- *That therefore soldier loyalty belongs exclusively to the people.*
- *That this people demand:*

End the war!
Away with the war prolongers!
Immediate peace and reconstruction of Germany!

Figure 48: Allied propaganda leaflet dropped during operations.

Operation 8: 12th – 13th August, 1944

12th – 13th August, 1944. Target – Opel aircraft and motor transport works, which was also making parts for the V-1 and V-2 projectiles – Russelsheim near Mainz and Frankfurt, Germany.

This night operation was our first raid on a target in Germany, which posed certain difficulties such as navigation in darkness, the target being out of the range of GEE (the navigational aid), the target being well defended and deep in German territory, the proposed zig-zag course there and back taking us near highly defended areas and the threat of attack by night fighters.

Twenty-four 578 aircraft were detailed to attack this target. We took off at 21:25 in LK "E", LL584 with a bomb load of 8,000 lb comprising high explosive and incendiaries.

The proposed outward course had six changes of direction to confuse the enemy and to avoid highly defended areas. At one stage in darkness and out of GEE range the navigator asked me to let him know when our port wing-tip was in line with a lake, other landmarks were difficult or impossible to see. Progressing on dead reckoning courses the navigator decided to climb into the astrodome and take a series of star shots with the sextant in order to establish our position. Along the route we saw flares and beacons, which were meant to confuse us with the idea of bombing decoy targets. However, we eventually reached the target and bombed the Pathfinders' TIs from a height of 20,000 feet at 00:22 through intense flak and searchlights.

Following release of the bombs, it was the flight engineer's job to check for hang-ups, that is, bombs that failed to drop when the bomb release button was pushed. Checking for hang-ups was done by opening inspection openings in the floor of the aircraft over the bomb-bay. On this occasion my flight engineer reported a hang-up, which meant that I had to open the bomb-bay doors resulting in a reduction in our airspeed. He had considerable difficulty in releasing the hang-up, which dropped somewhere over Germany. On checking the remainder of the bomb stations he found other hang-ups, it then dawned on him that the hang-ups weren't bombs but the canisters for holding the incendiary bombs. When the bomb release button was pushed the canister opened up releasing the incendiary bombs. This was the first time that incendiaries were part of our bomb load. It's called learning the hard way. We all had a chuckle about this including the flight engineer.

The return route took us through seven changes of direction following fairly closely the reciprocals of the outward course. We landed back at base at 03:40 after a flight of 6 hours 15 minutes.

Our squadron experienced serious difficulties on this operation. F/Lt. C.W. Bryson in LK "C", LW548 abandoned the operation soon after take-off because his GEE set became Unfit for Service (U/S). He jettisoned his bomb load and returned to base. F/Lt. R. Hutchinson's aircraft LK "X", MZ543 was hit by flak over the target damaging the starboard outer engine, which had to be stopped and the propeller feathered. The mid-upper turret was holed. The aircraft returned to base. F/O J. Bluring's aircraft LK "O", LW496 was shot at by a Lancaster and two fighters but the aircraft returned safely. F/Sgt. J.S. Allen in LK "B", LW473 bombed at 00:16 with the

port outer engine damaged by flak. Experiencing trouble with both port engines he landed at the Woodbridge Emergency Landing Strip

Nothing was heard from LK "T", NA604 piloted by F/O John Pearson, a Canadian, after leaving Burn. It is believed that this aircraft was shot down by night fighters and crashed at Monchbusch, Germany where all the crew lost their lives. They were buried in the Durnbach War Cemetery.

Another aircraft LK "K", LW383 did not return and nothing was heard of it after take-off at 21:49. It was piloted by the Australian F/O Owen Scott MacPhillamy, who came from the Forbes district in NSW. It appears that on the return from Russelsheim when at a height of 7,000 feet the port wing was hit by anti-aircraft fire causing a fire. A night fighter then attacked the aircraft. The pilot ordered the crew to bale out. The Australian Flight Engineer, Sgt. F. Newman while turning off the petrol supply to the port engines was hit by the night fighter and badly wounded, as also apparently was one of the gunners. The intercommunication system went out of action. Although well on fire and attacked by the night fighter the aircraft was brought down to within 20 feet of the ground and came in to land at a fairly normal angle in a field near the village of Chapelle-a-Oie, which is located 11 km west of Ath in the province of Hainaut, Belgium. At this point the aircraft blew-up, F/O MacPhillamy was thrown out breaking his neck and killing him. The Rear Gunner, Sgt. L. Stafford was killed when thrown against the wall of a barn over which the aircraft was passing. Sgt. Newman was blown into a tree, which broke his fall. He survived and was taken prisoner until the end of the war, together with the Bomb Aimer Sgt. N.R. Beamish and the Wireless Operator F/Sgt. L.R. Bodey who had baled out.

The literal translation of Chapelle-a-Oie is Vault-with-Goose.

F/O Owen Scott MacPhillamy aged 21; P/O John Wensley Hamilton, Navigator aged 35; Sgt. George Ernest Ward, Mid-Upper Gunner aged 19, and Sgt. Leonard, Rear Gunner aged 19, who died in this action were buried in the Chievres Communal Cemetery. The village of Chievres is approximately six km from Ath on the south side of the road between Ath and Mons.

When attending the No. 10 EFTS 50th Anniversary Reunion at Temora, NSW during the ANZAC weekend in 1991, I met a former member of 578 Squadron, who was stationed there for a considerable time. He knew Owen MacPhillamy quite well and he said that MacPhillamy had a premonition that he would not survive his tour of operations.

As MacPhillamy was an officer the only time that I had any discussions with him was at briefings and possibly debriefings. He impressed me as being a fine type of fellow and the most handsome man that I have ever seen.

Eventually F/O MacPhillamy's contribution was recognised when he was posthumously awarded a Mention in Dispatches (MID) as recorded in the *London Gazette* 39344 of 28th September, 1951.

Russelsheim was a very dangerous target as evidenced by the high loss of 13 Lancasters and 7 Halifaxes amounting to 6.7% of the 297 aircraft that participated in the operation comprising 191 Lancasters, 96 Halifaxes and 10 Mosquitoes.

One day when operations were cancelled we took a trip to the so-called swinging seaside town of Bridlington. Being there during day-light hours it appeared to be a quiet place, however, it may have come to life after dark.

14th August, 1944. Target – Tractable 21A.

This was the battle for Falaise in the Normandy beachhead area. It was a daylight operation in support of the Army.

We weren't required for this operation but 10 aircraft of 578 Squadron attacked the target and returned safely.

Two Lancasters were lost on these raids.

Operation 9: 15th August, 1944

15th August, 1944. Target – enemy airfield – Tirlemont in Belgium.

Twenty-four 578 Squadron aircraft were detailed to attack this target. This was part of an attack by 1,004 aircraft comprising 599 Lancasters, 385 Halifaxes, 19 Mosquitoes and 1 Lightning on 9 enemy airfields in Holland and Belgium in preparation for a renewed night offensive against Germany. Three Lancasters were lost.

This was one of those very rare days when the visibility was perfect. When on the outward route at 14,500 feet over the North Sea we had the magnificent view of south-east England, the north-west of France, Belgium, much of Holland and part of Germany.

We took off at 10:15 in LK "E", LL584 fitted with Monica 3 and a bomb load of 11,000 lb comprising 3 x 1,000 lb GP, 6 x 1,000 lb SAP (Semi-Armour Piercing) and 4 x 500 lb GP bombs. At 12:08:30 from a height of 14,500 feet we bombed the red markers going down over the airfield, our bombs landing on a runway.

We encountered moderate but direct flak each time when crossing the fortified coast line and from Brussels and Antwerp. We could clearly see where the Luftwaffe had bombed out the central business districts of these cities. We returned safely to base landing at 14:25 after a flight of 4 hours 10 minutes.

The invasion of Southern France started in the early hours of this day. The landings were only lightly opposed and the Allied troops advanced rapidly. The Allied breakout from Normandy was also taking place at this time.

Operation 10: 16th – 17th August, 1944

16th – 17th August, 1944. Target – Kiel, Germany. The aiming point was the square in front of the Hauptbahnhof. Kiel was a ship building centre and home port for submarines, which were moored in reinforced concrete pens for their protection.

As Kiel was recognised as a very dangerous target, I thought it prudent to warn my navigator to be prepared to give me a course for Sweden in the event that we struck trouble and were unlikely

to be able to return to base. Sweden was a neutral country and if one landed there it was possible to be repatriated back to England, which was preferable to spending the rest of the war as a POW in Germany.

This was a night operation on which 23 aircraft of 578 Squadron were detailed to attack the target.

Our aircraft was LK "C", LL548 fitted with Monica 3. Our bomb load of 6,000 lb comprised 1 x 2,000 lb HC (High Capacity), 56 x 30 lb and 360 x 4 lb incendiary bombs. Taking off at 21:25 we were the second aircraft to take off, which meant that we had to stooge around for 34 minutes before setting course over the base at the specified time of 21:59. We were then faced with the long haul over the North Sea where our height was not to exceed 2,000 feet to avoid detection by the German radar. Well on into the flight in total darkness our aircraft performed a violent action when the nose and left wing suddenly dropped, which I immediately corrected. Unseen in the darkness we apparently had encountered the slipstream of an aircraft not far in front of us.

On reaching 7° E longitude we altered course to pass north of the island of Pellworm avoiding the numerous islands many of which were fortified. Approaching the west coast of the German part of the Danish peninsula we started climbing to our bombing height. Reaching a pre-determined point over a fjord east of the town of Schleswig we turned onto our bombing course of 169° magnetic. On arriving at the target we bombed the centre of the red and green markers at 00:15 from a height of 17,500 feet. The Master Bomber was not heard. The incendiary bombs had caused a great conflagration. The flak was intense with many searchlights.

When well clear of the target area the engines were throttled back and the aircraft trimmed to give a controlled gradual descent at an economical cruising speed resulting in a saving of fuel. Doing two dog-legs after leaving the target we headed for the same point at 7° E longitude where we had altered course on our outward journey. On reaching that point we returned to base by flying the reciprocals of our outward flight arriving there at 03:05 after a flight of 5 hours 40 minutes.

The main planes of our aircraft and in particular their leading edges received some shrapnel damage from exploding anti-aircraft shells.

One of our aircraft was coned in searchlights on its bombing run and received flak damage but returned to base. Another aircraft lost brake pressure and had to land at Carnaby.

348 aircraft took part in this operation comprising 195 Lancasters, 144 Halifaxes and 9 Mosquitoes. Three Halifaxes and two Lancasters were lost.

Serious damage was caused to the docks area and to many of the ship building firms.

The Friday, August 18th, 1944 edition of the *Daily Express* reported on Bomber Command's activities covering various operations including the giant day-light operations on 15th August, 1944 against the Luftwaffe night-fighter airfields in which we attacked the Tirlemont airfield in Belgium and the Wednesday night 16th – 17th August, attack on Kiel in which we participated.

Bombers over Germany see no Luftwaffe

Express Air Reporter BASIL CARDEW

POWERFUL Luftwaffe fighter forces which at one time were to be encountered unfailingly when Bomber Command attacked Germany in strength were completely absent during the 1,200 bomber assault on Kiel and Stettin on Wednesday night.

Nothing was seen except a few odd enemy aircraft which arrived late, and even in the dangerous run in and out in the area of the Low Countries the usual large formations of spear-head interceptors were not in evidence.

This points directly to the success of the 3,000-plane assault by British and American aircraft on the enemy's fighter bases in Germany, Holland, and Belgium 36 hours earlier.

It is a development which may have the most vital and immediate consequences in the air war, for it suggests that the Luftwaffe's resistance in north-west Europe has, at least for the time being, been entirely neutralised.

Swamped in bombs

A few minutes before Stettin and Kiel, feeder ports for the German armies protecting East Prussia were swamped in bombs from the 1,200 heavies, a force of swift Mosquitos carrying 4,000lb bombs swooped on Berlin for the third night running.

Both at Stettin and Kiel the Germans appear to have been taken unawares. Opposition was poor and the key feeder centres were sacked with fire and high explosives.

Thoroughness of the Luftwaffe wipe-out in Holland and Belgium and Germany, too, in Monday's giant operation is made pretty clear when Bomber Command lost not more than 16 planes in the whole of Wednesday night's operation.

Figure 49: Daily Express, *18th August, 1944, covering operations conducted on 15th and 16th – 17th August.*

Operation 11: 18th – 19th August, 1944

18th – 19th August, 1944. Target – Synthetic oil refinery – Sterkrade, Ruhr Valley, Germany.

Twenty aircraft of 578 Squadron were detailed for this operation. Our aircraft was LK "C", LL548 fitted with Monica 3. Our bomb load of 8,000 lb comprised 12 x 500 lb MC and 4 x 500 lb GP bombs. We were the first aircraft to take off at 22:24 in this night-time operation. Being first off meant that we had to stooge around for 30 minutes before setting course over the base at the specified time of 22:54. Our dog-leg course took us down over England to a point south of the The Wash before crossing the coast south of Great Yarmouth. Then across the North Sea crossing the Dutch coast and Hitler's Atlantic Wall (the heavily defended coastline) about half way between Amsterdam and Rotterdam, then two more dog-legs to the heavily defended target, which was producing an essential commodity for the German war machine. It has been reported that this target was ringed by upwards of 100 ack-ack guns. On reaching the target through intense flak and numerous searchlights we bombed on the red markers at 01:02 from a height of 19,600 feet. A large fire was seen in the target area. Three dog-legs took us to a point on the Dutch coast north of the defended Amsterdam area. The coastal defences opened fire and I saw what appeared to be an aircraft explode in mid-air ahead of us and about 10 degrees to the right of our course. Crossing the North Sea our landfall on the English coast was Flamborough Head where we altered course for base. As we descended we ran into cloud several thousand feet thick.

Continuing our descent we passed through the cloud into an area of clear air but were now faced with a strange weather phenomenon of a surface inversion producing a thick mist covering the land surface and blotting out all landmarks. On the course that we were on the flare-path of our base could not be seen and as we were now down to about a thousand feet thought of local hazards, such as rising land features and church steeples, passed through my mind. Explaining to the navigator that no discernible features could be seen anywhere he took some GEE (radionavigation) fixes and produced a course for base. The new course soon brought us over our base with its flare-path and illuminated identifying code sign on the left side near the beginning of the runway. We landed at 03:20 after a flight of 4 hours 56 minutes.

Two of our aircraft were hit by flak but returned to base. There were 234 aircraft mainly from 4 Group participating in this operation, comprising 210 Halifaxes, 14 Mosquitoes and 10 Lancasters. One Halifax and one Lancaster were lost. Bomber Command reported that the raid was successful and that the plant was seriously damaged. Aircraft from 51 RAF Squadron based at Snaith, not far from our station, participated in this operation. As only one Halifax was lost in this attack on Sterkrade, I believe it was this aircraft that I saw explode over the Dutch coast. Nothing was heard of this aircraft after take-off and there was no German report regarding it. It is highly likely that it was Halifax LW538 of 51 Squadron piloted by F/O Bill Quan from Murwillumbah that I saw explode with the remains of the crew and aircraft falling into the sea, which could explain why there was no German report of its destruction.

Huge Bomber Fleet Catches Nazi Defences Napping

A MULTI-PRONGED air attack on Germany by more than 1,000 R.A.F. planes on Friday night caught the defences napping, and target areas soon became seas of flame.

Bomber Command struck at Bremen, the second largest port in the Reich, and Sterkrade-Holten, an important oil plant in the Ruhr, while block-buster carrying Mosquitos went to Berlin

Other forces of heavy bombers attacked the oil storage depots at Rieme in Belgium and the railway centre at Connantre, some 70 miles east of Paris. Only four planes are missing from these operations.

Earlier in the evening flying bomb launching sites in Northern France were also attacked.

There was no cloud over Bremen and soon after the attack began fires spread with unusual rapidity throughout the port.

A pilot on a reconnaissance aircraft reported there was a mass of flame over a very wide area, with smoke up to 23,000 feet.

A Mosquito pilot on his way back from Berlin said the whole port seemed to be ablaze from end to end.

OIL AS THE TARGETS

A Lancaster rear-gunner, Sergt. C. Branch, of Birmingham, reported: "The markers dropped by the pathfinders were surrounded by innumerable fires. They were spreading as though someone was running round with a torch, lighting up street after street. I have never seen them spread so rapidly, nor have I seen such an intense concentration."

Although the synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade-Holten was put out of action not long ago as a result of an attack by Bomber Command, and the enemy's need for oil is now so desperate that he has been forced to repair badly damaged plants in the Ruhr.

"As we were going in to bomb," said Flying Officer R. S. Cumming, a Halifax pilot, of Mitcham, Surrey, "there was a big explosion followed by a violent fire.

At Rieme, where the bombing was also highly effective, the Germans had stored several thousand tons of oil in tanks belonging to the refinery of the Purfina Company. This depot in Belgium, is now sufficiently near to the battle front to be of critical importance to the German Army.

LULLS BETWEEN ROBOT RAIDS

Flying bomb attacks on London and Southern England on Friday night and yesterday were few, short and sharp. Many of the missiles were shot down over the Channel and in country districts.

A.A. defences and R.A.F. fighters went into action and few of the robot bombs reached the built-up areas.

Some casualties were caused, one of which was fatal, when a bomb fell on allotments holdings in Southern England during the morning. Blas, damaged houses in the vicinity.

Another flying bomb fell on a miniature golf course. The only damage done was to trees, which were stripped of their leaves. No casualties were caused, and a nearby hospital escaped with broken windows.

Figure 50: Daily Express, *18th August, 1944, covering operations conducted on Sterkrade.*

The *Daily Express* reported on Bomber Command activities covering among others the night attack on 18th – 19th August, on Sterkrade in which we participated. The report also mentions flying bomb attacks.

BOMBER PILOT

With the wings of a bird, and the heart of a man
he compassed his flight,
And the cities and seas, as he flew,
were like smoke at his feet.
He lived a great life while we slept,
in the dark of the night,
And went home by the mariner's road
down the stars' empty street.

Ernest Rhys
From *Rhymes for Everyman*, Peter Davies Ltd.

It is interesting to trace the fate of 578 Squadron aircraft with the code letters LK "E".

LK "E" serial number LK797 flown by P/O C.J. Baron, VC, crashed at Ryhope after being shot up on the Nuremburg raid on the night of 30th – 31st March, 1944.

LK "E" serial number LK834 piloted by Sgt. W. Davidson on a raid on Bottrop on the night of 20th – 21st July, 1944 was lost in a mid-air collision with LK "K" serial number MZ 696 over Balkholme, Yorkshire.

LK "E" serial number LL584 piloted by W/O D.L. Wood crashed at Lille, Belgium following a raid on Gelsenkirchen on 11th September, 1944.

LK "E" serial number RG353 piloted by F/Lt. P. Brown was shot down on the night of 21st – 22nd February, 1945 during a raid on Worms, Germany crashing at Obersülzen.

LK "E" serial number LW469 successfully completed operations and was struck off charge on 20th December, 1946.

We flew LK "E" serial number LL584 on four occasions fortunately without incident. However, with the loss of four out of five aircraft having the same code letters, it would appear that to fly anyone of them and survive must be considered very fortunate.

Figure 51: Halifax B Mk. III, LK "H" serial LK809, 578 Squadron Burn.
Illustration from jacket artwork on The Pendulum and the Scythe, *by Ken Marshall.*

I flew this aircraft (Figure 51) LK "H-How" LK809 on four occasions. "H-How" was frequently flown by F/Lt. Geoff Sanders with whom I did my second dickie trip. Geoff's Flight Engineer Ken Marshall wrote a poem in memory of "H-How".

NOT FORGOTTEN LADY

We first met in 1944, when I was twenty years old.
She was much younger than I, but I took to her on first sight.
There was no reaction from her, but then I didn't expect there would be.
The relationship, as far as she was concerned, was of a working nature,
As long as I carried out my part of the bargain to the best of my ability I would hear no complaint from her.
Her function was to carry out the purpose for which she and I had been engaged
And in doing just that, we would get along fine together.
We didn't spend all our time in each other's company,
I often went out with my pals
Whilst she was occasionally taken out by someone else.
This arrangement in no way affected the close relationship which was forged between us.
I was with her on the eve of my twenty-first birthday and we didn't get back home Til early next morning.
There were times when our partnership hit a rough patch and if it had not
been for Her tenacity, all my efforts might have been to no avail.
The relationship lasted for just over four months, when I was obliged to move on;
She passed into partnership with one of my colleagues after I left.
It is now over forty-seven years since we severed our relationship, but I shall Never forget her as long as I live.
Farewell LK809, 'H-How' Halifax Mk. III
'One of the very best!'

Ken W. Marshall, DFC (1991)

An important fact which we noticed was the superior level of aircraft maintenance on an operational squadron compared with that experienced at training stations. I don't know why this was so but it may have been due to the ground staff having what could be called a proprietary interest and a great sense of responsibility in maintaining their charges in their best possible condition so that their aircrews weren't put in jeopardy through poor workmanship when facing the enemy. I commend the ground staff for their skill and dedication in maintaining the aircraft in such good condition. Their work carried out at all hours and in all weathers was greatly appreciated.

A TRIBUTE TO GROUND STAFF

He wears a suit of faded blue, no brevet on his breast – he's got more streaks of engine oil than medals on his chest.
He doesn't sit behind the guns of a multi-engined plane, or steer a heavy bomber way above the clouds and rain.
He wields a heavy spanner and a piece of oily rag while other fellows shoot the foe and boast about their "bag".
He works in mud and sleet and rain and curses senseless war and wonders ninety times a day what he joined the Air Force for.

He's just an ordinary fitter, nothing more and nothing less, with a pair of
dark blue overalls in place of battle dress.
But he strikes a blow for freedom with his honest British skill as
sure as any man who aims the bomb or the gunner with his kill.

After a poem printed in *The Turret* magazine
of the Air Gunners' Association.
Reprinted in *The LK Times*, Issue No. 2, December, 2002.

There was a weekly competition in 4 Group for the squadron with the highest aiming point score. 578 Squadron had a very good record in this competition and if I remember correctly the Squadron won the competition on at least one occasion while we were there.

Perusal of our aiming point photos would show that we made a useful contribution to the war effort and that we upheld the Squadron's motto of "Accuracy".

While in the squadron we had been working very hard. From 25th July, when we did three flights on that day until 19th August, when we completed the last mission we had flown on 20 of the 26 days and been on 12 missions, which left very little time for any other activity.

For me, as a pilot and captain, life on an operational squadron was the ultimate experience. There was a lack of petty regulations resulting in a greater sense of freedom and a particular consideration for aircrew personnel. There was no doubt that the infrastructure of the squadron was important for its successful operation, however, in the end it was the aircrews who carried the fight to the formidable enemy and in doing so they experienced a gamut of emotions ranging through anticipation, excitement, wonder, tension, apprehension, relief and satisfaction.

Our raid on Sterkrade was our last operation at 578 Squadron as we had been selected to go to Driffield in East Yorkshire to re-form 462 RAAF Squadron. While we felt some pride in being chosen to re-form the Squadron we were disappointed to leave 578 Squadron where the imprimatur of its popular and charismatic leader had such a profound effect on all who had served under his command. Through his leadership he had welded the unit into an outstanding Bomber Command squadron where there was great fellowship among personnel, high morale and a great sense of purpose to achieve objectives. We departed from Burn to take up the Driffield posting on 22nd August, 1944.

On 23rd August, 1944 Wing Commander David Wilkerson relinquished command of 578 Squadron to take up a posting to No. 9 Course, Empire Central Flying School, Hullavington, Wiltshire. Command of 578 Squadron then passed to Wing Commander A.G.T. James, OBE, who was in charge until he handed over to Wing Commander E.L. Hancock on 20th February, 1945, who stayed until the Squadron was stood down on 15th March, 1945.

To 462 RAAF Squadron at RAF Base Station, Driffield, East Yorkshire

Figure 52: Badge of RAF Station, Driffield. Source: RAF, UK Crown Copyright.

Figure 53: The Badge representing both Australian Squadrons 466 and 462.

The history of the RAF Base, Driffield dates back to the First World War when it was used to fly night-fighters against Zeppelins. Later the base was dismantled but re-established in 1936 when a new threat posed by the Luftwaffe became apparent. RAF Driffield became the home of No. 4 Yorkshire Bomber Group, first flying Whitley bombers and later in the war Wellingtons and Halifaxes.

On 15th August, 1940 during the Battle of Britain the base was severely damaged when attacked. Seven RAF personnel including a WAAF, six members of the East Yorkshire Regiment and a civilian were killed. It was the end of an era when RAF Driffield closed down on 30th June, 1996.

We arrived to become a re-formed 462 RAAF Squadron at Driffield and were required to share station facilities as the station was already occupied by 466 Squadron. The station was under the command of an Australian, Group Captain Forsyth, DFC.

The buildings at the base were substantial being built of brick during peace-time. They were painted in wartime camouflage paint. Our living quarters were in a dormitory type accommodation where my crew took up half of the large room and members of another crew took up the other half. The ablutions area attached to the dormitory was well fitted out with baths, but no showers.

The history leading up to the re-formation of 462 Squadron at Driffield has several chapters.

On 6th September, 1942, 462 RAAF Squadron was formed under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) Agreement at Fayid, Egypt. The Squadron was equipped with Halifax II aircraft. While it was designated as an RAAF unit it contained few RAAF personnel. The Squadron performed successfully in the Mediterranean Air Command.

On 1st February, 1944 the Squadron moved to Celone in Italy where it was re-formed as 614 RAF Squadron. 462 RAAF Squadron was disbanded on 1st March, 1944.

In due course the "powers-that-be" decided to re-form 462 RAAF Squadron. As a result of that decision a letter[1] received from Head Quarters, Bomber Command by RAF Driffield stated that it was decided to form No. 462 (RAAF) Squadron at Driffield with effect from 12th August, 1944: established under Article XV of the EATS Agreement with 20 Halifax Mark III aircraft.

It was the intention to have as many Australians as possible in the re-formed squadron. Consequently Australian captains with some Australian aircrew members operating in 4 Group squadrons were selected to re-form the squadron. With an Australian captain and two other Australians in our crew and having completed 11 ops we were an experienced crew and very suitable for the re-formation of the squadron.

The 462 Squadron consisted of Flights "A" and "B" commanded by Squadron Leader J.T. Brophy, DFC and Squadron Leader B.J. McDermott, DFC respectively. We were assigned to "B" Flight.

The Squadron was commanded by Wing Commander D.E.S. (Dave) Shannon, DFC, MID. Squadron identification markings were "Z5".

On arrival at Driffield we were due for seven days' leave, which was immediately granted. On this occasion we all went our separate ways. I went to London. The Englishmen went home. I felt there was a strange incongruity about the fact that whilst fighting in the front-line with its concomitant dangers, it was possible for one to go home and enjoy the luxury of peace and tranquillity and the loving embrace of family. This was indeed fortunate for the Englishmen but for the rest of us who were far from home we had to make our own way as best we could.

The *Boomerang Club* at *Australia House* was a popular venue when in London. There was always the possibility of meeting fellows with whom one had trained. Australian newspapers and magazines were available. Another feature visitors enjoyed was the serving of waffles with ice cream and maple syrup. It would be interesting to learn how *The Club* obtained ice cream as it was not available in shops or restaurants. It may be that *The Club* had an arrangement with the American forces who considered ice cream to be a normal part of their diet, war or no war.

Sight-seeing, attending stage shows and movies occupied the leave; my 21st birthday came and went without celebration.

Returning from leave we were pleased to meet up with the Australian F/Sgt. Robert Venters Jubb and his crew, who had been with us at Moreton-in-Marsh OTU. He was posted to 76 RAF Squadron at Home-on-Spalding Moor prior to taking up the 462 Squadron posting. Jubb wished to be known as "Bill" in honour of and in deference to his elder soldier brother, who was killed in the North African campaign. After the war he was known as "Bob". He and his crew were also assigned to "B" Flight. Bob was exactly one year older than I was.

On the night of 2nd – 3rd November, 1944 when attacking the target at Dusseldorf, Germany Bob's aircraft was shot down by a German night-fighter. The crew were ordered to bale out and

[1] Recorded in the Operations Record Book (1/336) held by the Australian War Memorial Museum, Canberra

landed north of the Rhine River. The crew were captured and became POWs. Bob baled out and landed south of the Rhine. He evaded capture and made his way to the American lines and was safely returned to England, where he rejoined the squadron. This operation was Bob's last. He was awarded a DFC.

With two squadrons and their associated infrastructure Driffield was a big unit. At least 40 Halifax heavy bombers had to be maintained. In addition to the large number of aircrews there was a large administrative staff and ground staff servicing a multiplicity of disciplines.

It was obvious from the start that the atmosphere here was nothing like the laid-back friendly attitude we had experienced at Burn. I believe many others had feelings of nostalgia for their first squadron posting. There was no evidence of any expression of assistance or of the importance of us, the aircrews who were taking the fight to the enemy. In place of the happy informal atmosphere that prevailed at Burn we were aware of a certain stiffness and a stricter discipline, which probably emanated from the attitude of the Station Commander, who for some reason was not very popular. The attitude here appeared to be, "You are all experienced so get on with the job – we Australians will show them that we can do it!"

From my experience on various stations there was a great disparity in the abilities of Sergeants' Mess cooks. I believe the cook at Driffield lacked any flair and the ability to produce attractive and appetising meals. For example, breakfast often consisted of a piece of smoked, intensely salted, heated fish, which was most unappetising. The main meal of the day invariably had brussels sprouts as a vegetable. It was many years after the war before I could eat that vegetable and then only occasionally. There were two urns in the mess for black and white tea. The product of these urns, which produced stewed "tea" was a horrible tasting liquid while the white "tea" also being unpalatable contained strange white granules of an unknown substance. These unpalatable beverages were unique to the Driffield Sergeants' Mess and bears out my contention that the cook was incompetent. Food in the Officers' Mess was better.

The Allied Armies broke out of the Normandy beach-head area and advanced rapidly, linking up with the Allied units, which had recently landed in southern France. Paris was liberated on 24th August, Belgium was entered early in September with the vital port of Antwerp being seized almost intact and most of the country was liberated within a few days. American forces were halted when they reached the Siegfried Line and there was difficulty in maintaining them as their supply lines were up to 500 miles long.

The Germans had left do-or-die garrisons in all the Channel ports and although the Allies held the perfectly placed port of Antwerp, the Germans controlled the banks of its forty-mile river approach. The armies were forced to halt after the British and American airborne troops just failed to take vital road bridges across the Rhine, Waal and Maas rivers and had to wait for the clearance of the Channel ports and Antwerp.

Operation 12: 3rd September, 1944

While we were on leave the squadron commenced operations and had participated in four of them before our return. On our return we were scheduled to participate in the raid on Soesterberg,

a German fighter base in Holland on 3rd September, 1944. This was part of an attack on airfields in southern Holland to reduce the menace of German fighters during Bomber Command's attack on oil refineries, transport systems and industrial cities.

So after our break, it was now back into the fray. Nine 462 Squadron aircraft were scheduled for the operation. We took off at 15:43 in Z5 "B", SW440. Weather conditions gradually worsened on the way to the target. On the run up to the target with bomb doors open the bomb aimer announced that he was unable to sight the target because it was obscured by cloud and that we would have to orbit the target, which meant breaking off our bombing run and going round again. This was generally considered a dangerous manoeuvre because the enemy's defences had the opportunity to concentrate their fire on the aircraft within their range for a longer time. Sure enough, we were about half-way through the orbit when suddenly there was a high pitched "ping" noise caused by a four-inch-long piece of flak smashing through the stressed metal skin of our aircraft about two feet away from the head of the flight engineer. I believe that noise will remain in my memory forever. On our second approach the bomb aimer was able to sight the airfield through a break in the clouds, which was bombed at 17:34 from a height of 13,700 feet with 11,000 lb of bombs.

Heading for base we flew into heavy 10 tenths cloud and rain. Requesting permission to land at base I was informed that the airfield was closed and they directed me to Woodbridge emergency landing field. On approaching Woodbridge I was informed that the field was closed and they directed me to RAF Station Newmarket. Approaching Newmarket I was granted permission to land, however, that was going to be a difficult exercise as I had to descend to about 300 feet to get a glimpse of the airfield in fading light, rain and mist to the ground. There were no paved runways, the whole airfield being grassed. I would have to land a heavy bomber on slippery wet grass with its inherent dangers. Because of the extremely bad weather conditions, it was not possible when doing a circuit to keep the airfield in view. Doing two circuits on instruments I was not in a position to land, however, on a timed longer third circuit I landed the aircraft safely at 19:55 after a flight of 4 hours 12 minutes. With skill I avoided the aircraft planing on touching down on the wet grass in the rain. We attended a brief de-briefing, had a meal and went to bed in our under-clothes.

On this day 675 aircraft – 348 Lancasters, 315 Halifaxes and 12 Mosquitoes carried out heavy raids on six airfields in southern Holland. All raids were successful and only one Halifax was lost.

The next day, after the aircraft was refuelled, we flew back to Driffield in 45 minutes.

Operation Penguin: The V-2 Ballistic Missile

In August, 1944 British agents reported that Hitler was poised to launch the supersonic V-2 rockets at London. On 7th September, 1944 Hitler launched his Operation Penguin raining hundreds of V-2 rockets down on Britain. The V-2 was more dangerous than the V-1. This was a ballistic rocket, the ancestor of the missiles, which dominated the Cold War; its inventor Werner von Braun, was to play a large part in the development of the US Intercontinental

Ballistic Missile (ICBM) arsenal after the war, as well as the NASA space program. The V-2 was capable of carrying a 2,000 lb warhead over 225 miles. Unlike the V-1, the V-2 was invulnerable to defences as it flew on a parabolic arc over 50 miles high and fell almost vertically onto its target. Travelling faster than the speed of sound it detonated without warning. Fortunately for the intended victims, the V-2 suffered from difficulties with accuracy caused by electrical problems in the gyrocompass guidance system. Nevertheless many arrived in suburban England. Some 1,100 V-2s were fired at Britain, killing 2,274 people in London and hundreds more were fired at the advancing Allies after D-Day. However, the government did not disclose that the V-2 vengeance weapon was being used against England until 10th November, 1944. No doubt this delay was a security matter with the objective of denying the enemy any useful information regarding the results of the attack. Lacking information about the big explosions Londoners must have wondered what was happening.

Figure 54: British scientific experts experimenting with a V-2 rocket at Cuxhaven, Germany, November 1945. Bettmann via Getty Images.

Figure 55: A V-2 rocket launched under British supervision as part of Operation Backfire, October 1945. Photo: Charles Black, courtesy of Warwick Black.

Operation 13: 9th September, 1944

Our next operation was Army co-operation on 9th September, 1944 with an early morning start taking off at 06:25 in Z5 "Q", NA619 to attack the German defences around the port of Le Havre. Twelve 462 Squadron aircraft took part in the operation, which was cancelled at the target by the Master Bomber due to cloud obscuring the target. From a height of 12,000 feet at 08:37 we jettisoned at sea 3,000 lb of our bomb load of 8,000 lb and returned to base with 5,000 lb landing at 10:30 after a flight of 4 hours 5 minutes.

272 aircraft – 230 Halifaxes, 22 Lancasters and 20 Mosquitoes – of 4, 6 and 8 Groups were dispatched, but because of poor visibility, the Master Bomber ordered the raid to be abandoned before any of the heavies bombed. No aircraft lost.

Operation 14: 10th September, 1944

The Allied objective was to capture the port of Le Havre, consequently on 10th September, 1944 we in Z5 "Q", NA619 together with 13 other 462 Squadron aircraft took part in the Army co-operation operation code named Alvis to Le Havre taking off at 14:48. The Pathfinders marked the enemy positions resulting in accurate bombing. We bombed the target with 11,000 lb of bombs from a height of 10,000 feet at 17:06 with good results. We returned to base at 18:58 after a flight of 4 hours 10 minutes.

992 aircraft – 521 Lancasters, 426 Halifaxes, 45 Mosquitoes – attacked eight different German strong points. No aircraft lost.

Operation 15: 11th September, 1944

11th September, 1944 – Army co-operation – target code named Cadillac attacking the German positions outside Le Havre in their futile attempt to hold the port. Eleven 462 Squadron aircraft were detailed to attack this target. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 06:12 and attacked the target in good visibility with 11,000 lb of bombs from a height of 10,000 feet at 07:50 returning to base at 10:02 after a flight of 3 hours 50 minutes.

218 aircraft – 105 Halifaxes, 103 Lancasters, 10 Mosquitoes of 4, 5, 6 and 8 Groups. The bombing was carried out accurately in conditions of good visibility but the Master Bomber ordered the final wave to cease bombing because of smoke and dust. 171 aircraft bombed, none were lost.

Two British divisions were then making an attack on Le Havre and the German garrison surrendered a few hours later, but the port was not cleared for Allied use until several weeks later because of German mining and demolitions.

We didn't encounter any flak during our attacks on Le Havre.

A *Daily Sketch* war reporter on the ground captured on film and published in the newspaper pictures of the attacks by British armour and Bomber Command on the German garrison's positions around the port of Le Havre. As a result of the concerted attacks the garrison did the wise thing and surrendered contrary to Hitler's orders to hold out at all costs.

It gave us a good deal of satisfaction to see that our effort had contributed to the capture of this important port. When on operations in the Le Havre area from our vantage point in the sky we could see the Normandy Beachhead area where the Allied forces landed on D-Day. There was a great armada of ships in the Baie de Seine bringing supplies of all kinds to the armies. The artificial harbour code named Mulberry built to provide facilities for unloading and loading ships at the port of Arromanches was clearly visible. Great concrete caissons built in England were towed across the Channel and lowered to the sea-bed to form a semi-circular sheltered port for shipping.

Figure 56: Nearly 10,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Le Havre (Seine-Maritime) in September 1944. Photo: British National Archives.

Several days later when we attended the movies in Driffield the newsreel showed the successful attack that led to the capture of Le Havre. There was always friendly rivalry between the crews of Halifaxes and Lancasters regarding the attributes of their aircraft and when the newsreel showed a very good picture of a lone Halifax a chap seated towards the front of the theatre yelled out in loud voice "Lancaster", causing much laughter, boos and jeers.

Operation 16: 12th September, 1944

12th September, 1944. Target – synthetic oil plant – Buer, Gelsenkirchen, Ruhr, Germany.

Fourteen aircraft of 462 Squadron were detailed to attack this target in a daylight operation. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 11:17. Approaching the target from a distance of at least 50 miles we could see where the target was because of the black cloud of smoke from shell bursts in the sky. The Germans defended these targets with ferocious determination. On the approach our aircraft encountered predicted flak and closer to the target we had to pass through a box barrage of extremely intense flak. Our aircraft was hit four times when shrapnel ripped holes through the stressed-metal skin. Flying flak fragments from bursting shell peppered the leading edges of the main planes with holes. While passing through the maelstrom of flak bursts I suddenly realised that I had a death grip on the control column and told myself to relax. We bombed the target from a height of 20,000 feet with 8,000 lb of bombs at 13:35. Immediately after the bomb aimer released the bombs he yelled out over the intercom, "Let's get the hell out of here!" However, I had to hold the aircraft steady on course for another 30 seconds for the obligatory photo. It is

amazing to contemplate how we could pass through such an inferno without major damage to our aircraft or injury or death of our crew. It was on targets such as this that we had to have nerves of steel. We landed back at base at 15:57 after a flight of 4 hours 40 minutes.

Two Halifaxes and one Lancaster were lost in the attack on this target.

Flak and Searchlights

The Germans called anti-aircraft guns Fliegerabwehrkanonene from which is derived the widely used abbreviation flak.

Three types of heavy flak were used – 88 mm, 105 mm and 128 mm. Two types of light flak were used – 20 mm and 37 mm. The light guns, of which more than 22,000 were deployed in the west, fired a great deal of tracer and were largely ineffective against Lancasters and Halifaxes at their normal operating heights. The 37 mm flak could, however, reach the Stirlings. Of the heavy guns, by far the most numerous were the 88 mm, which formed the core of the German flak defences.

The greatest of all German artillery was the versatile 88 mm (3.46 in) gun, which was a triple-purpose weapon used as a field artillery piece, anti-tank gun or anti-aircraft gun. This gun fired a high velocity shell, which could penetrate almost any tank armour in existence and its accuracy was legendary. This gun was just 25 feet long and needed a crew of six men to fire eight rounds per minute over a maximum range of 33,000 yards. The German Army was equipped with a variety of artillery pieces, but few were as lethal or as respected as "The 88". Of the 11,000 heavy flak guns deployed in the west, about 10,000 were of the 88 mm Type 36. These guns fired a 9.4 kg (20.68 lb) shell to a height that brought all three types of heavy bomber within their range. I remember an occasion when on leaving the German target area on a daylight operation seeing three Mosquitoes heading for Berlin at a height of about 30,000 feet with flak bursting at their height but just behind them. The explosive charge within the shell caused the shell case to burst and fill the air with 1,500 small, high velocity, jagged fragments. The shells immediately on bursting produced two black balls of smoke in the shape of a figure eight. Some shells produced red balls of smoke, but our Intelligence Section was unable to give an explanation for this phenomenon.

The Germans had calculated that a high explosive charge of 500 grams was sufficient to destroy an aircraft, but it was the shrapnel rather than the explosion of the shell that was designed to inflict damage. Lethal damage could be inflicted within a 30-yard radius and less serious damage up to 200 yards distance. Generally the shells were fitted with the mathematically calculated and manually set time fuses.

German defences were arranged in a manner to pick out approaching aircraft with radar controlled searchlights and anti-aircraft guns. The target itself was protected by batteries of up to 40 heavy flak guns producing a box barrage of intense fire. Aircraft passing through the box barrage were again subjected to radar controlled predicted fire.

Operation 17: 13th September, 1944

13th September, 1944. Target – oil refinery – Nordstern, Gelsenkirchen, Ruhr, Germany.

Another daylight operation to "Happy Valley", although later in the day than yesterday.

Thirteen aircraft of 462 Squadron were scheduled for this operation. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 16:03. Again the black cloud of smoke from shell bursts could be seen when at least 50 miles from the target. On the approach to the target we encountered intense predicted flak before entering the area of the box barrage where we were subjected to an intense flak attack. We bombed the target from a height of 17,600 feet at 18:31:30 with 8,000 lb of bombs. As we completed our bombing run I saw a Halifax on its approach to the target going down in a slow vertical spin. Only two crewmen bailed out. Returning to base we landed at 20:38 after a flight of 4 hours 35 minutes.

140 aircraft – 102 Halifaxes of 4 Group and 28 Lancasters and 10 Mosquitoes of 8 Group attacked the Nordstern oil plant. Large explosions were seen through the smoke-screen. Two Halifaxes lost.

Operation 18: 15th – 16th September, 1944

15th – 16th September, 1944. Target – U-boat base – Kiel, Germany.

Sixteen aircraft of 462 Squadron participated in this night-time operation. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 22:38. We were required to fly at a height below 2,000 feet to avoid detection by the German radar. Our initial course led us in a south-east direction as though heading for the Continent but on reaching 2° E longitude we altered course to a north-east direction until reaching 8° E longitude where we altered course to an easterly direction, which took us between the island of Rømø and a small island to its north. As we climbed to our bombing height we came under attack by the coastal defences. Incendiary shells were coming straight at us but fortunately we were just out of their range as they curved away under us. Crossing Denmark and on reaching a coastal cape in the south-west of the island of Funen we altered course for Kiel. On approaching the target we saw two decoy targets. From a height of 19,000 feet we bombed the target marked by red flares and yellow stars at 01:20 with 6,500 lb of bombs comprising one 2,000 lb high-capacity armour piercing high explosive bomb and 4,500 lb of incendiaries. Many searchlights were weaving about trying to pick up aircraft. We assessed the flak attack by the defences as moderate. As a result of the bombing attack there was a tremendous conflagration in the target area and the Intelligence Section reported that our photograph recorded intense incendiary tracks. Just after completion of our bombing run I noticed another aircraft immediately above us and only inches away from my cockpit. I could see the reflection of the light from the burning fires below in its port-side whirling propellers. I called up the mid-upper gunner on the intercom and asked him why he hadn't reported the proximity of the other aircraft. It must have been at least 30 seconds before he answered saying that he hadn't seen it. We were extremely lucky that we hadn't been involved in a mid-air collision, which often happened when many aircraft were concentrated in a short time span in bombing attacks. We returned to base without further incident landing at 03:58 after a flight of 5 hours 20 minutes.

490 aircraft – 310 Lancasters, 173 Halifaxes, 7 Mosquitoes from 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups. Four Halifaxes and two Lancasters lost.

A highly concentrated raid in which the old town, modern shopping centre and port areas were severely damaged.

On 16th September, 1944. We received the sad news that on this day the former charismatic leader of 578 Squadron, Wing Commander, David Wilkerson had been killed in an aircraft accident at 61 OTU, RAF Rednal, near Oswestry in Shropshire.

David was one of four passengers in an American built Martin Baltimore, used by the RAF as a ground attack light bomber, which crashed killing him and one other officer and injuring the pilot and the remaining two occupants.

The Official Accident Report stated that the aircraft crashed immediately after take-off, the pilot having lost rudder control and being unable to keep the nose of the machine from dropping. The Accident Investigation Branch, looking closely at the tail assembly, found the locking mechanism (which prevents the rudder from flapping in the wind whilst the aircraft is parked) was still partially applied, thus preventing full movement. There was also a suggestion that some sort of engine failure had occurred.

Thus ended, tragically, the life of an outstanding leader.

Operation 19: 17th September, 1944

17th September, 1944. Target – German garrison defences around Boulogne, France. Army co-operation.

This was an early morning operation with meals schedules for 03:30. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 07:01 and bombed the target from 9,000 feet at 08:49 with 11,000 lb of bombs. The camera failed to operate. There were several bursts of flak near us but we escaped damage. With good visibility our flight paths enabled us to have a good view of the Pas de Calais area and the White Cliffs of Dover. We returned to base at 10:26 after a flight of 3 hours 25 minutes.

762 aircraft – 370 Lancasters, 351 Halifaxes and 41 Mosquitoes dropped more than 3,000 tons of bombs on German positions around Boulogne in preparation for an attack by Allied troops. The German garrison surrendered soon afterwards. One Halifax and one Lancaster lost.

Exercise: 19th September, 1944

19th September, 1944. At 14:25 we took off in Z5 "P", MZ792 fitted with the H2S navigation aid for a cross-country navigation exercise for the navigator and bomb aimer. The exercise took 2 hours 20 minutes.

Exercise: 23rd September, 1944

23rd September, 1944. Again flying Z5 "P", MZ792 we took off at 11:56 for another cross-country navigation exercise for the navigator and bomb aimer using the H2S equipment.

However, the starboard outer engine developed a "coring" problem, which caused me to feather the propeller and stop the engine and return to base after a flight of 1 hour 35 minutes.

Operation 20: 23rd – 24th September, 1944

23rd – 24th September, 1944. We participated in the night-time operation where the target was the railway marshalling yards at Neuss, Dusseldorf, Germany. Fourteen aircraft of 462 Squadron took part in this operation. We took off at 19:01 in Z5 "Q", NA619.

For a time during this operation while flying in the stormy weather conditions, I noticed that there was St. Elmo's fire between the tips of the two whirling propellers of the port engines. With a flame-like appearance it was an electrical discharge and caused no problem to the aircraft because during its construction all parts were bonded to each other. The name St. Elmo is an Italian corruption through Sant' Ermo, of St. Erasmus the patron saint of Mediterranean sailors who regard St. Elmo's fire as the visible sign of his guardianship. The guardian may have been watching over us too.

The target was obscured by cloud but the Pathfinders were marking the area with TIs dropped on the clouds. The target was probably marked by the Pathfinders using "Musical Wanganui", the code name for blind marking of a target using Oboe-guided Pathfinder aircraft. Oboe was a blind-bombing device fitted to Pathfinder aircraft controlled by transmissions from ground stations in England. This system was employed during bad-weather operations. At our briefing for this operation we were informed that there would be no Master Bomber as he was not necessary when the Oboe system was used.

We bombed the markers from a height of 17,500 feet at 21:50 with 11,000 lb of bombs. Our photograph showed cloud only. We were subjected to moderate barrage flak.

After completing our bombing run the wireless operator operating his "Fishpond" equipment announced that he had picked up a night-fighter approaching us. Shortly after the rear gunner sighted an aircraft approaching us and gave the order, "Corkscrew port, go!" I immediately took the evasive action of corkscrewing through two of these violent manoeuvres after which the fighter broke off his pursuit of us.

We returned to base at 00:11 after a flight of 5 hours 10 minutes. After completion of all matters we got to bed at about 02:30. It had been a busy, eventful, long day.

549 aircraft – 378 Lancasters, 154 Halifaxes, 17 Mosquitoes of 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups. Five Lancasters and two Halifaxes lost.

The target area was seriously damaged.

Operation 21: 25th September, 1944

25th September, 1944. Army co-operation. Target – German garrison defences around the port of Calais (2.B.), France.

An early morning start with ops meal at 04:00. Fourteen 462 Squadron aircraft were required for this operation. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 06:38 with a bomb load of 11,000 lb. On arrival at the target we found that it was obscured by 10 tenths cloud. At 08:15 we did an orbit of the target and at 08:24 the Master Bomber aborted the operation with the code word, "London". There was slight flak. When over the sea on the return journey we jettisoned 3,000 lb of bombs comprising 4 x 500 lb and 1 x 1,000 lb from a height of 6,000 feet at 08:45. We landed with 8,000 lb of bombs on board at 10:23 after a flight of 3 hours 45 minutes.

872 aircraft – 430 Lancasters, 397 Halifaxes, 45 Mosquitoes were sent to bomb German defensive positions but encountered low cloud. Only 287 aircraft were able to bomb through breaks in the cloud. No aircraft lost.

Operation 22: 26th September, 1944

26th September, 1944. Army co-operation. Target – German garrison defences around the strategic position of Cap Gris Nez, code named Calais (7.C.), France.

Ops meals were on at 05:15. Thirteen 462 Squadron aircraft were detailed for this operation. In Z5 "Q", NA619 we were the first aircraft to take off at 07:59 with a bomb load of 11,000 lb.

On approaching the target the bomb aimer announced that his bomb-sight was U/S, consequently we had to orbit the target while he endeavoured to rectify the problem. Fortunately we didn't experience any trouble from flak. In good visibility the marked target was bombed from a height of 9,000 feet at 10:10 with good results. We returned to base at 12:09 after a flight of 4 hours 10 minutes.

722 aircraft – 388 Lancasters, 289 Halifaxes, 45 Mosquitoes – carried out two separate raids. 531 aircraft were dispatched to four targets at Cap Gris Nez and 191 aircraft to three targets near Calais. Accurate and concentrated bombing was observed at all targets. Two Lancasters lost.

Bob Jubb's Wireless Operator Peter Brett, an Australian, had bought a beautiful big black Rudge motorbike. One evening when I was admiring the machine and ops were cancelled he asked me if I'd like to go for a ride with him. I agreed and we headed off along the road adjacent to the northern side of the airfield. Arriving at a little village with a small pub we decided to stop for a drink. On entering the pub we noticed several elderly men seated at small tables drinking their beers. They looked like farming types. We ordered our beers and stood at the bar to drink them as there was no place to sit. The elderly drinkers kept their eyes on us and didn't say a word during the whole time we were there. We gained the impression that we were intruding and not welcome so we finished our drinks and left.

Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) was an organisation that travelled around the country providing entertainment for personnel at military establishments. There were musicians, vocalists and actors and their concerts were well received. One evening at Driffield we were seated in the theatrette when the show opened with a trumpet fanfare by several fanfare trumpeters standing in the back row of the theatrette. Being unaware that the trumpeters were to

perform it came as a surprise to hear them and see their position. It was the first time that I had heard and seen fanfare trumpeters and I was impressed. It was an enjoyable show.

Exercise: 27th September, 1944

27th September, 1944. In Z5 "Q", NA619 we participated in a half-hour fighter affiliation exercise for the benefit of the gunners.

Operation 23: 30th September, 1944

30th September, 1944. Day-light operation. Target – oil refinery – Bottrop, Ruhr, Germany.

The US 8th Air Force, the American bomber force operating in the UK only did day-light raids, during which they flew in formation. Those in authority in Bomber Command decided that the RAF should emulate the US Air Force and fly in formation during day-light operations. The idea was that flying in formation provided greater protection for each aircraft, especially against enemy fighters, because of the concentrated fire-power of the gunners. However, the effectiveness of the protection against fighter attack depended to a great extent on the tightness of the formation – the tighter the better. It was doubtful that the bombing would be any more accurate.

This raid on Bottrop was to be the squadron's first formation flying operation but who was going to be the leader of the formation? The matter was discussed in the Pilots' Hut and it was decided that the pilot who at that time had completed the most operations in 462 Squadron would be the leader. It so happened that I was the one who met this criterion so I and my crew had the honour and responsibility of leading the squadron's first attack while flying in formation. I was a flight sergeant and my crew consisted of flight sergeants and sergeants.

No doubt because of my experience I was also required to take on this operation a newly arrived pilot on his second dickie trip. Some time later I was talking to another pilot about this fellow and he said that he had also taken him on a second dickie trip after which we didn't see him again. No one knew what happened to him.

Fourteen aircraft of 462 Squadron were required for this operation. Our squadron was scheduled to attack the target in the second wave. We were the first aircraft to take off at 09:30 in Z5 "X", NP971 with the latest equipment, setting course at 10:31 with the squadron aircraft forming up around us. About an hour into the operation it was necessary to make a slight alteration in our course. Crews were previously advised that any course alteration would be signalled by the firing of a Verey pistol flare from our aircraft, so the flight engineer fired off the flare and we altered course. On approaching the target we were faced with 10 tenths cloud obscuring the target with tops at 6 - 7,000 feet. The Master Bomber gave the code-word Sourgrapes so the bomb aimer bombed the target on dead reckoning with 8,000 lb of bombs at 12:05 from a height of 18,500 feet. Immediately after bombing, canals were seen through a gap in the clouds. During the attack we were subjected to moderate flak. We returned to base at 14:10 after a flight of 4 hours 40 minutes.

From available information the Intelligence Section plotted where our bombs would have landed. The plot indicated that they would have landed very close to the aiming point.

On our return from the operation the CO asked me how the formation flying had been. I told him that it could have been better so on 2nd October, 1944 he sent the squadron on a formation flying and bombing exercise for 85 minutes. I had to take up another crew for their benefit. They had probably not been on the Bottrop raid. Both the pilot and navigator were flying officers and the navigator was not in favour of formation flying on operations so there could have been some resentment in practising formation flying, not that they could do anything about it.

We Australians were told that if we had the opportunity we should visit the scenic Cumberland Lakes District in the north-west of England as it was a particularly beautiful area. My Navigator, Henry Day and I decided that on our next leave we would spend some time there, so with seven days' leave available to us commencing on 3rd October, 1944 Henry and I set out for the Lakes District. Our destination was the village of Bowness on Windermere near the town of Windermere on Lake Windermere. We booked in at the *Stag's Head Inn*. That evening we attended a dance in the local hall.

One morning when we were looking around down on the wharf area an English RAF pilot officer drove up in his sports car. We got talking to him and he offered to take us on a trip around the district. We travelled around the large Lake Windermere. The trees were showing their autumn tints, which contributed to the beautiful scenery. During our trip we stopped for a drink at a strangely isolated inn with the amusing name of the *Mucky Duck*. The next day our RAF friend took us to Keswick on the northern end of Lake Derwentwater, which gave us the opportunity to see much more of this very beautiful country.

For dinner one evening we were served a portion of delicious freshly cooked salmon. I asked where the salmon had come from and was told that the proprietor had been fishing that day and caught it.

We had an enjoyable break in possibly the most scenically beautiful part of England.

Operation Hurricane

On our return we found that during our absence the squadron had been engaged in only three operations, which may have been due to the fact that Bomber Command was preparing for its Operation Hurricane.

On 13th October, 1944, Sir Arthur Harris received the directive for Operation Hurricane, which stated, "In order to demonstrate to the enemy in Germany generally the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces in this theatre ... the intention is to apply within the shortest practical period the maximum effort of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the 8th United States Bomber Command against objectives in the densely populated Ruhr." Bomber Command had probably been forewarned of the directive because it was able to mount the first part of the operation soon after first light on 14th October. No heavy bombers had flown on operations for 48 hours and 1,013 aircraft – 519 Lancasters, 474 Halifaxes and 20 Mosquitoes – were

dispatched to Duisburg with RAF fighters providing an escort. On this operation 957 bombers dropped 3,574 tons of high explosive and 820 tons of incendiaries on Duisburg. Fourteen aircraft were lost – thirteen Lancasters and one Halifax. It was probable that the Lancasters provided the early waves of the raid and drew the attention of the German flak before the flak positions were overwhelmed by the bombing. This was the heaviest daylight attack on Germany yet undertaken by Bomber Command.

For their part in Operation Hurricane, the American 8th Air Force dispatched 1,251 heavy bombers escorted by 749 fighters. More than 1,000 of the American bombers bombed targets in the Cologne area. American losses were five heavy bombers and one fighter. No Luftwaffe aircraft were seen.

It was now evident that both RAF Bomber Command and the 8th US Air Force Bomber Command had reached a stage where each Command had more than a thousand heavy bombers at its disposal. The Allied Air Forces had gained air superiority and could attack any target nominated by the Target Committee with devastating results and minimum losses. Doubtless the aim of the directive was to destroy the enemy's ability to continue the war through the complete destruction of resources and infrastructure and the breaking of the people's morale. It was unfortunate that Hitler and his clique of sycophants, while impervious to the suffering of their people and knowing full well that the war was lost and that they would not survive after the cessation of hostilities, chose the destruction of the nation leaving a ruin for the conquerors and the inhabitants.

Operation 24: 14th October, 1944

14th October, 1944. Target – Duisburg "R", Germany.

Fifteen 462 Squadron aircraft were detailed for this operation, however, 14 became airborne because Z5 "D" was a non-starter due to loss of oil pressure in the port inner engine. Ops meals were scheduled for 02:30. Operational call signs were "Grenville" for our base and "Big Boy" for the main force. H-hour, that is, the time at which the attack was planned to commence was 09:00 with TIs marking the target at 08:55. We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 06:27. We were in the third wave and on arrival at the target area there was good visibility with six tenths cloud. The bomb aimer reported bombing buildings half shrouded in smoke at 09:08. We bombed from a height of 19,000 feet with 10,000 lb of bombs. There was much smoke and many fires. The flak was rated as moderate.

When over the North Sea on the return journey, a Spitfire from the fighter escort formed up about 30 feet away from our starboard wing tip. I checked through the radio frequencies available to us to see if he had anything to say to us but he was maintaining radio silence. He maintained his position for quite a while then suddenly he took off at high speed.

We returned to base at 12:07 after a flight of 5 hours 40 minutes.

During our de-briefing there was an announcement over the Tannoy that Sgt. Frank Smith was to report to the CO. Frank duly reported to the CO who told him that there had been a complaint

from a Spitfire fighter pilot about the guns of our rear turret being trained on him. Frank admitted that that was so and when asked for the reason for his action, he said that aircrews had been warned that there had been occasions when the Germans had attacked Allied aircraft using captured Spitfires and he was being prepared for any offensive action. There would be little doubt that the CO would have admonished him for his thoughtless act. When I asked him what the CO had said about his action he said the CO had just said, "Get out of here!" Frank's action had been unknown to me.

We were informed that the squadron was required for operations that night. This was going to be a very long day.

Operation 25: 14th – 15th October, 1944

14th – 15th October, 1944. Target – Duisburg, Germany.

Bomber Command continued Operation Hurricane by dispatching 1,005 aircraft – 498 Lancasters, 468 Halifaxes, 39 Mosquitoes – to attack Duisburg again in two forces, two hours apart. During the night 941 aircraft dropped 4,040 tons of high explosive and 500 tons of incendiaries. Five Lancasters and two Halifaxes were lost.

Nearly 9,000 tons of bombs had thus fallen on Duisburg in less than 48 hours resulting in great devastation. At the briefing that evening when it was announced that the target was again Duisburg there was surprise together with a feeling of some reticence about attacking the same target again so soon after the massive and successful attack that morning. There could be no doubt about the intent of Operation Hurricane.

Fourteen 462 Squadron aircraft were detailed for this operation but again Z5 "D" was a non-starter due to badly oiled up plugs on the port outer engine and high oil temperature on the port inner engine. Thirteen aircraft became airborne in perfect weather.

This would be our twenty-fifth official operation.

The length of a tour of operations depended on a points system where an operation on a German target gained four points and an operation on a target in an occupied country gained three points. I believe the original tour was a nominal 30 operations, however, with the adoption of the points system the length of the tour was extended. I have heard that the US Air Force tour was 25 operations.

We took off in Z5 "Q", NA619 at 00:12 with a bomb load of 10,000 lb. We were in the first wave and made good progress reaching an altitude of 19,000 feet, the best that our aircraft could attain on this operation. In the target area we could see a mass of flames and explosions with smoke rising to 19,000 feet. There were many searchlights weaving about the sky and the flak was intense.

In the bomber stream, on track and nearing the target, it was highly probable that the German radar connected to their searchlights and anti-aircraft guns had locked onto us and at the most propitious time would illuminate our aircraft and subject us to intense anti-aircraft fire with the

intention of shooting us down. That time came when we were about to start the bombing run under the directions of the bomb aimer. Suddenly a series of events occurred in rapid succession that placed us in imminent danger. Our aircraft was coned by searchlights fully illuminating and exposing us as an ideal target for the anti-aircraft guns. We were attacked with notorious Germanic ferocity with shells from large calibre anti-aircraft guns bursting in close proximity all around us. A shell burst directly in front of us sending shrapnel in all directions. A jagged piece of shrapnel broke through the cockpit windscreen and hit me in the head with a tremendous whack smashing my left eye, the flesh and bone of my left eyebrow and inflicting a wound to the bone in the left part of my forehead. I immediately announced over the intercom, "I've been hit." Realising that I was seriously wounded and that my crew and aircraft were in great danger I had to make every effort to extricate us from that situation. With the intensity and accuracy of the attack I was concerned that our vulnerable situation placed us in a position where a shell might hit us in the bomb-bay with tragic consequences. I gave the order to drop the bombs at the same time opening the bomb-bay doors. The bomb aimer later reported that the bombs were released at 03:27 aimed at a cluster of many red TIs. After giving the order to drop the bombs I lost consciousness. A short while later on regaining consciousness I found that I still gripped the control column with both hands. I was immediately aware that the aircraft was in a vertical dive and travelling at very high speed towards the ground while being held in the glare of the searchlights. It appeared to me that more searchlights had joined the cone, no doubt hoping to get some kudos in the event of a kill. We were down to 4,000 feet and my concern was to bring the heavy bomber out of the high-speed dive without damage. As I pulled back on the control column we were subjected to tremendous G forces, so much so that I feared that the wings might come off, so I eased the control column slightly forward to reduce the risk. The three forward crewmen were in difficulties because of the attitude of the aircraft and G forces as they scrambled around trying to reach me in the cockpit. Fortunately we came out of the dive safely. I asked the navigator for a course to Manston in Kent where there was an emergency landing strip. After making a right hand turn onto the course I started climbing to about 11,000 feet, a height which I thought would give us some measure of safety in the event of further difficulties. Fortunately we had escaped from the searchlights. It so happened that diving down the cone was a way of escaping from it and the associated flak.

The flight engineer placed a first aid dressing over my injuries. I was barely able to remain conscious as I was suffering the effects of concussion, severe shock, blood loss and excruciating pain.

My altimeter had stuck on 4,000 feet so I had to rely on the navigator calling out readings from his instrument.

The forward crewmen decided that I should be moved to the rest position with the bomb aimer to take over piloting the aircraft. This was an extremely risky proposition as he had no experience in flying the aircraft and I was not in favour of the idea. I had extreme difficulty in speaking so when they tried to move me I resisted by moving my right arm up and down to indicate that I didn't wish to be moved. They accepted my decision. The bomb aimer came and sat beside me. There was a lot of chatter on the intercom, which was unhelpful so the bomb aimer told everyone

to keep quiet. As if we weren't in enough trouble the rear gunner announced that night-fighters were dropping flares nearby. I saw some of them on our starboard side some distance away and a little above us. Flares continued to be dropped for a considerable distance. Luckily we weren't attacked.

On our way to Manston it became necessary to gradually lose height down to circuit height of 1,000 feet. I remember putting the nose of the aircraft down hoping that the bomb aimer would pull the throttles back but he didn't grasp the situation with the consequence that the aircraft gained height again so I had to make the effort to adjust the throttles myself.

Despite our difficulties our arrival over the Manston emergency landing strip was spot on, which demonstrated our expertise as aviators even under adverse circumstances. On our arrival at Manston I found that I would have to make a circuit to approach the flare path. Making a tremendous effort I requested permission to land, which was granted. Part way through the circuit I almost passed out and the aircraft went into a dive and the navigator yelled out, "Bert, for God's sake pull her out", which I did. After recovering and levelling out the rear gunner called out, "Is there anyone there?" I tried to answer but couldn't and no one else responded to his question. The air traffic controller then called me up and wanted to know where I was. As I was unable to give an explanation regarding my location with great effort I said that I was in the funnel, which I knew was not correct but it was my means of letting him know that I was still in the circuit area. Eventually I completed a circuit, left or right I don't remember. It has been said that because I had difficulty in seeing, the bomb aimer suggested I do a right hand circuit. I believe I would have had just as much difficulty doing a right hand circuit as a left handed one. Be that as it may, I reached the funnel and made a good approach followed by a very good landing. Turning on to a perimeter track a vehicle appeared in front of me with an illuminated sign saying, "Follow me." On reaching the parking position the sign changed to "Stop." I stopped all engines. We landed at 04:53. We had been airborne for 4 hours and 41 minutes, a significant portion of the flight in a hellish situation. So it was with great satisfaction and relief that I had achieved the almost impossible in bringing my crew and aircraft back safely. Mission completed.

THE PILOT

Who is the man up front, this Driver – Airframe?
Pilot? Captain? What's in a name?
Let's say he's just another member of the crew
But this description simply will not do. He's trained to fly this kite – agreed.
But more, much more, he's there to lead: To bring us back, unscathed and sane
Not once, but time and time again.
We looked to him for miracles of mind and will.
For deeds beyond the range of human skill:
What words of ours describe him well?
No words suffice: we called him Skip and followed him to Hell.

Philip Nicholson

Medical staff and others came aboard, disconnected my oxygen tube and R/T connection and lifted me out of the aircraft and took me to the medical station. I heard a doctor ask the crew if I

had been given a morphine injection. Someone said that I hadn't whereupon he immediately gave me an injection, which rendered me unconscious and stopped the pain.

The crew after debriefing and a meal enquired about my well-being and were told that I had died. Seriously wounded and suffering from severe shock and effects of concussion my condition deteriorated to its nadir. I was diagnosed as having Cheyne Stokes breathing, which in layman's terminology is the "death rattle". However, I had survived – just!

The decision was made to send me for specialist attention at Princess Mary's RAF Hospital at Halton, Buckinghamshire, north-west of London. Sometime about mid-day I was flown by aerial ambulance in a semi-conscious state to an aerodrome close to the hospital. On arrival at the hospital they sat me up and photographed my wounded face after which I was taken to the operating theatre where a Harley Street specialist operated on me to restore my features as best he could.

When the crew left the aircraft they found that the rear gunner was missing and no one knew where he could be. A short time later a message was received that the rear gunner had baled out and was located at a farmer's home. There were two versions of what happened to him after baling out. The first was that he landed on a railway track and hurt an ankle but made his way to a farm house. Much later when I discussed this matter with him another version came to light. He said that after he called out, "Is there anyone there?" and received no answer he left his turret and found the main escape hatch open and concluded that the rest of the crew had abandoned the aircraft and for some reason he had not heard the order so he donned his parachute and baled out landing in the water in the Thames estuary. Releasing his parachute and inflating his Mae West life jacket, which we all wore on operations, he swam to shore, (he was a good swimmer) which was not very far away. He said the shore where he landed was rocky. He made his way to a farm house from where RAF Manston was informed of his location. He said he was told that he was fortunate to reach the shore where he did as the beach areas were mined. He was later taken back to the area where he came ashore and shown the mined areas. There was no report of a parachute being recovered.

Press reporters were stationed at Manston. They interviewed my crew and immediately published a report of our exploit, which appeared in both the English and Australian newspapers.

> He that outlives this day and comes safe home
> Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is nam'd.
> He that shall live this day and see old age
> Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours.
> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day.
>
> From Shakespeare, *Henry V.* Extracts of Henry's speech on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, October 25, 1415.

My crew in their operational flying gear returned to Driffield by train staying overnight at Syd Green's mother's home at 47 Courtenay Street, Kennington, London. Bob Jubb and his crew were sent to fly our aircraft back to Driffield.

Recovery and Conclusion

The healing of my wounds made good progress and a glass eye-shaped shell was placed in my left eye socket to retain its shape in preparation for an artificial eye. I received very good care and attention while in hospital. A Chaplain visited me and a Mrs Ellen Cairns, an Australian and Hospital Visitor from Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire called on me on a couple of occasions and wrote a very nice letter to my mother. Sgt. Ern Martin of the RAAF, a fellow patient wrote a nice letter to my family for me.

Several days after my admission my crew came to visit me. They were all very grateful that we had made it safely back to England. Charlie Walker told me he had never prayed so hard in all his life.

The following week after visiting me the crew wrote a two-page Airgraph letter to my parents expressing high praise and gratitude for my action and captaincy. The letter was penned by Henry Day on behalf of all crew members, who signed it. The Airgraph is reproduced in the Appendix at p.163, but is of poor quality, so is reproduced here:

Mr. & Mr. J. H. Cockerill
78 West St.
Casino
N.S.W.
Australia.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Cockerill,
You will no doubt have read the story of our return from a raid on the Ruhr and Bert's magnificent fortitude and courage. May we, as the members of his crew, express our greatest admiration of the way he kept at the controls until we were safely landed.
No one could have wished for a better skipper, his thoughts were always for the safety of his crew and no one will know, but he, what he went thru' that night, but we can assure you we owe our lives to his unselfishness and strong will-power. We are very pleased indeed to be able to say he has made a wonderful recovery and was bright and happy when we saw him last week.
We have been a very happy crew and have had many pleasant and memorable times together, both in the air and on the ground. We cannot praise too highly his leadership both during war and recreational times, and he carried his responsibilities with the greatest forethought and we feel most honoured to have been associated with him and do appreciate all he did for us. He was highly esteemed by all members of the squadron and we are glad to know that he has gained his so well earned Commission.
We learnt last week that Bert is probably returning home and are glad to be able to say that you will find him perfectly fit except for the loss of his left eye.

Yours very sincerely
"The Crew"

H R Day (Navigator) S A Green (Bomb Aimer)
J Lord (Flight Engineer)
F Smith (Rear Gunner)
K A Saxby (Murwillumbah, N.S.W. – Wireless Op.)
C Walker (M. U. Gunner)

I needed some answers regarding the prognosis for sight in my left eye, so with this in mind I had a heart to heart talk with the Sister-in-Charge, who informed me that it was impossible to repair the severely damaged eyeball necessitating its removal. The best that could be done was to be fitted with an artificial eye. I realised that my looks would be altered for the rest of my life. It was Sir Archibald McIndoe, Head Plastic Surgeon of Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, England, who said that, "Social disability is by far the greatest handicap." He had treated the burnt Battle of Britain pilots. On facing this hard cold fact I was gripped by the "black dog" for several hours. Being fortunate to survive I resolved to adopt a positive attitude concerning my situation and decided that I would overcome my difficulties.

About this time my mental faculties were tested by a doctor. I had to close my eye and describe and name various objects that were placed in my hand. I passed this test quite easily.

I believe the Sister-in-Charge sensed my state of mind and decided that I should participate in some form of rehabilitation. With this objective in mind she approached me with what appeared to be a plausible story that the hospital had received a request from the Captain of the ship, *Queen Mary* for a gremlin and that she would like me to make one. On agreeing to fulfil the request she provided me with a pattern and the necessary materials. In a couple of days after creating the gremlin the Sister said that she had also had a request from the Captain of the *Queen Elizabeth* for a gremlin and would I make one for him. I happily agreed to the request but was somewhat sceptical about the veracity of these requests. So another gremlin was created. I hope they behaved themselves, which would be difficult for gremlins.

The Welsh-born author, Roald Dahl who was born on 13th September, 1916 and died on 13th September, 1990 claimed responsibility for invention of the term, "gremlin", which applied to an imaginary trouble-making sprite. The term adopted by the Air Force during World War II in reference to inexplicable events concerning the operation of aeroplanes. For example, the aircraft that I frequently flew at 462 Squadron had a problem with "George", the automatic pilot. After trimming the aircraft to fly straight and level and engaging the automatic pilot the aircraft would perform correctly for some time then would begin a shallow dive to the left. Several times the defect was reported to the ground staff but without resolution. Doubtless "George" was under the influence of a left-leaning gremlin.

UNIDENTIFIED

This is the tale of the Gremlins
Told by the PRU
At Benson and Wick and St Eval –
And believe me, you slobs, it's true.

When you're seven miles up in the heavens,
(That's a hell of a lonely spot)
And it's fifty degrees below zero
Which isn't exactly hot.

When you're frozen blue like your Spitfire
And you're scared a Mosquito pink,

When you're thousands of miles from nowhere
And there's nothing below but the drink –

It's then you will see the Gremlins,
Green and gamboges and gold,
Male and female and neuter
Gremlins both young and old.

It's no good trying to dodge them
The lessons you learnt on the Link
Won't help you evade a Gremlin
Though you boost and you dive and you jink.

White ones will wiggle your wingtips,
Male ones will muddle your maps,
Green ones will guzzle your Glycol,
Females will flutter your flaps.

Pink ones will perch on your Perspex,
And dance pirouettes on your prop;
There's a spherical middle-aged Gremlin
Who'll spin on your stick like a top.

They'll freeze up your camera shutters,
They'll bite through your aileron wires,
They'll bend and they'll break and they'll batter,
They'll insert toasting forks in your tyres.

That is the tale of the Gremlins
Told by the PRU,
(P)retty (R)uddy (U)nlikely to many,
But fact, none the less, to the few.

An unnamed PRU pilot
Believed stationed at St Eval, Cornwall
circa 1941

After about three weeks my wounds had healed sufficiently for me to proceed to a dentist in a London suburb to be fitted with a plastic artificial eye. Production of the artificial eye took several days and the dentist told me it was the biggest eye he had made. While this was being done I was stationed at the RAF Reception Centre, Uxbridge.

At this time Bomber Command was directing its attention to targets ahead of the advancing Allied Armies in order to hinder German transport and supplies.

On the night of 6th – 7th November, 1944 F/O Roslyn (Ross) Downs Leake and his crew were in the battle order to attack Coblenz in Germany. They took off at 16:55 on 6th November, in Lancaster Mk. 1 "D" HK644 and nothing was heard of them after taking off. The crew of eight and the aircraft were presumed lost due to enemy action over the target on 6th November, 1944. The bodies of the crew were buried at Coblenz but were later exhumed and interred at Rheinberg

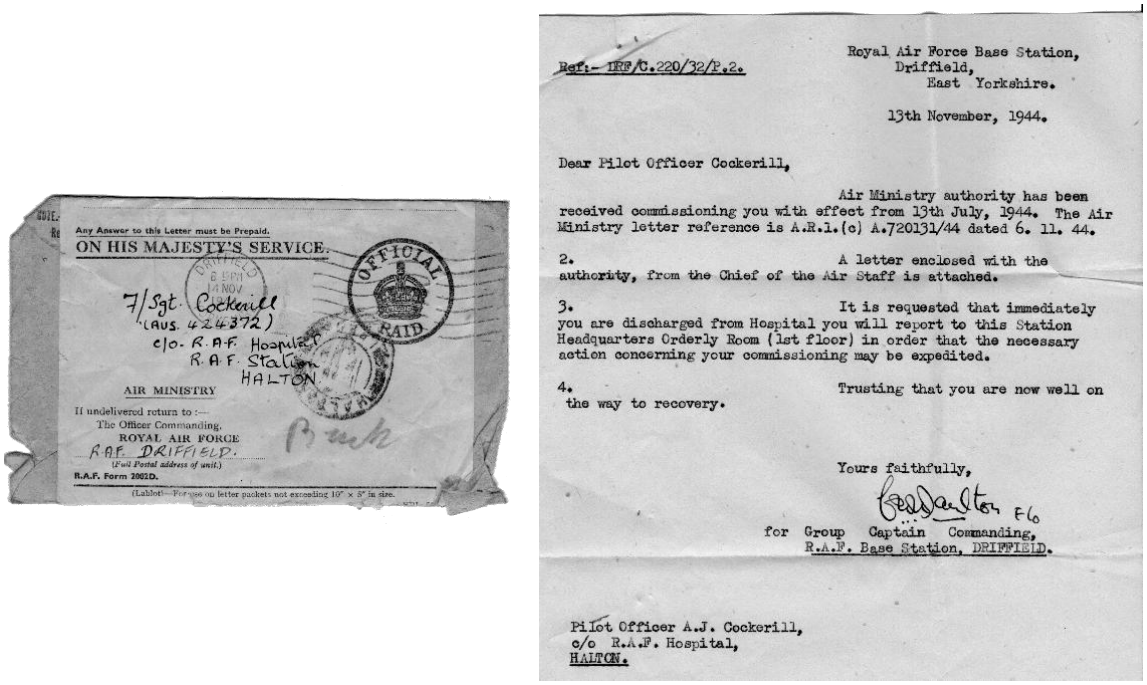
British Military Cemetery, 11 miles north west of Duisburg. Ross had completed 26 ops. This target was attacked by 128 Lancasters of 3 Group, two Lancasters were lost. Bomber Command reported that this was a successful raid with most of the damage being caused by a large area of fire in the centre of the town. The British Bombing Survey Unit later estimated that 303 acres, 58 per cent of the town's built-up area was destroyed.

Ross Leake was born on 3rd January, 1923. He was a jovial little fellow, who lived at 28A Addison Road, Manly, NSW prior to enlistment in the RAAF. His enlistment date was 12th September, 1942 the same as mine. He was in my Aircrew Trainee Flight 32H, No. 2 Squadron at 2 ITS Bradfield Park in 1942. He was categorised as a pilot trainee and I don't know where he did his elementary flying training. He arrived at No. 1 SFTS, Point Cook for training in No. 31 Pilots' Course, No. 3 Squadron, the same course and squadron that I was in. We were allotted to the same accommodation hut where his bed was opposite mine. We flew together on several occasions. On one of our joint flights he asked me to take a photo of him while flying the Airspeed Oxford, which meant that I had to crouch down on the floor of the cockpit to get a picture of the intrepid airman at the controls.

Following his posting to the UK where he underwent further training he was eventually posted to 622 RAF Squadron at Mildenhall, Suffolk.

Sadly, the happy smiling face that I knew would smile no more.

I had learned by this stage that I was promoted to Pilot Officer, back-dated to 13th July, 1944, and that I had been awarded an immediate Distinguished Service Order, DSO, although a public announcement of the award would wait until Australia Day, 26th January, 1945.



Any Answer to this Letter must be Prepaid.
ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE.
OFFICIAL PAID
7/Sgt. Cockerill (AUS. 424372)
c/o. R.A.F. Hospital R.A.F. Station HALTON
AIR MINISTRY
If undelivered return to :—
The Officer Commanding,
ROYAL AIR FORCE
R.A.F. DRIFFIELD.
(Full Postal address of unit.)
R.A.F. Form 2002D.
(Label—For use on letter packets not exceeding 10" × 5" in size.

Ref:- DFF/C.220/32/P.2.

Royal Air Force Base Station,
Driffield,
East Yorkshire.

13th November, 1944.

Dear Pilot Officer Cockerill,

Air Ministry authority has been received commissioning you with effect from 13th July, 1944. The Air Ministry letter reference is A.R.1.(c) A.720131/44 dated 6. 11. 44.

2. A letter enclosed with the authority, from the Chief of the Air Staff is attached.

3. It is requested that immediately you are discharged from Hospital you will report to this Station Headquarters Orderly Room (1st floor) in order that the necessary action concerning your commissioning may be expedited.

4. Trusting that you are now well on the way to recovery.

Yours faithfully,

for Group Captain Commanding,
R.A.F. Base Station, DRIFFIELD.

Pilot Officer A.J. Cockerill,
c/o R.A.F. Hospital,
HALTON.

Figure 57: Cover letter for Bert's back-dated commission to rank of Pilot Officer (see also p.165).

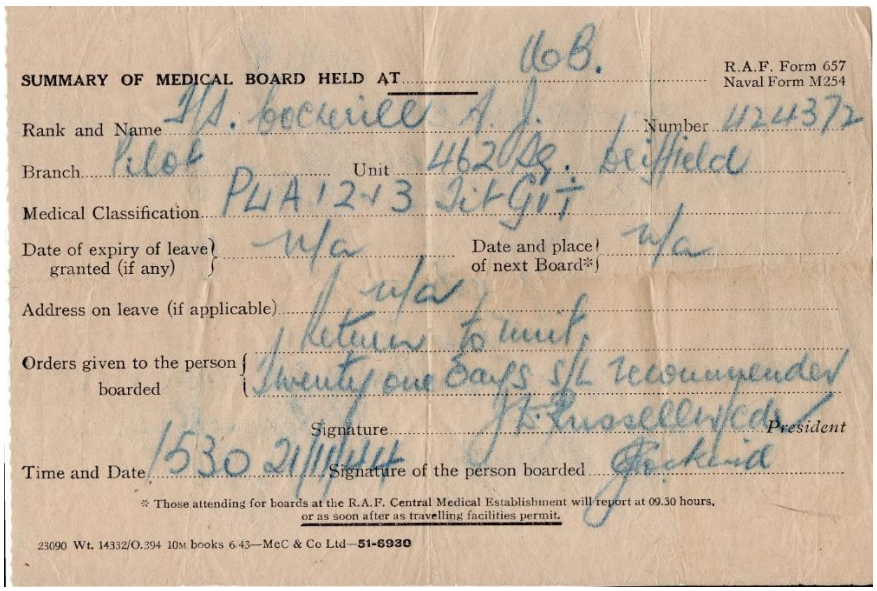
While in London I visited a tailor in the elite Savile Row, which is famous for its tailoring establishments. I was measured for an officer's uniform made out of the beautiful barathea cloth, also a woollen greatcoat. In view of my award, I asked the tailor to place a DSO ribbon on the uniform. The tailor remarked, "You are a very young man to have a DSO."

Returning to the hospital they were satisfied with my progress. I was discharged on 21st November, 1944. Later that day I was required to appear before a Medical Board at the RAF Central Medical Establishment at an address in London, where a decision would be made regarding my future. I was surprised to find that the Board consisted of only one person, a doctor.

Prior to facing the Board I had given serious consideration to my future. In the east the German Army was retreating before the massive onslaught of the Soviet forces while in the west the British and American Armies were making good progress against the German Army. Bomber Command and the US 8th Air Force were continuing their relentless attack on German industries, infra-structure and cities with devastating effect. There was no doubt that the defeat of Germany was not far off.

If I was to be taken off ops there was a possibility that I could be posted to a training establishment as a flying instructor. I had no desire whatsoever to return to the training scene.

I believed that with only one eye there would be a lot of testing, prevaricating and reticence to recognise my ability to pilot an aircraft and if approved there was no guarantee that my crew would still be available. At that stage of the war, it was unlikely that the Air Force would be prepared to spend the time and effort to investigate my competence to fly an aircraft. I had completed 25 official operations against the enemy. If it was decided that I would not be allowed to fly on ops again I thought the best thing to do was to repatriate me back to Australia.



SUMMARY OF MEDICAL BOARD HELD AT 106 B.

R.A.F. Form 657
Naval Form M254

Rank and Name W/C. Bocquille A. J. Number 112437

Branch Pilot Unit 462 Sqdn. Driffield

Medical Classification PLA 1-2-3 Fit Gr I

Date of expiry of leave granted (if any) n/a Date and place of next Board* n/a

Address on leave (if applicable) n/a

Orders given to the person boarded Return to unit, Twenty one days S/L recommended

Signature W/C Bocquille A.J. President

Time and Date 1530 21/11/44 Signature of the person boarded Bocquille

* Those attending for boards at the R.A.F. Central Medical Establishment will report at 09.30 hours, or as soon after as travelling facilities permit.

23090 Wt. 14332/O.394 10M books 6-43—McC & Co Ltd—51-6930

Figure 58: Medical Board Certificate.

In discussing my situation with the President of the Medical Board he was sympathetic to my viewpoint and considered that I had done enough operationally. He recommended that I be

granted 21 days' sick leave after returning to my unit, following which I would be repatriated to Australia.

So, for me the war was over! I felt numb. That was probably the best way of describing my feelings at that time. I was disappointed that I had been unable to complete an operational tour and that it would not be possible to maintain a close association with my crew. I was concerned about their future. I was extremely lucky to have survived many very dangerous situations. I had the satisfaction that I had made a useful contribution to the ultimate defeat of Hitler and his repugnant regime. The idea of returning home was indeed a pleasing prospect.

While the objective of Bomber Command was to engage in a strategic bombing campaign to defeat Germany, it was the young aircrew personnel who had the responsibility for its implementation. We had the skill but it was also necessary to have the courage to face the odds time and time again. Operational flying had a certain fascination with its challenge, excitement and anticipation of the unknown and the unexpected. No two operations were exactly the same but each had its inherent dangers, which had to be faced and if possible overcome. The constancy of operations imposed a burden on both the physical and mental health of aircrew personnel. I believe that operational flying probably affected all those who were engaged in it, but in general its insidious effects were not realised. Most of us were very young and all had responsibilities in our respective disciplines but none more so than the captain where final decisions and responsibilities lay. No doubt personal biorhythms and sleep patterns were upset as a result of the irregular hours for which operations were scheduled. We flew at all hours around the clock and in all types of weather. For captains the flying of a large bomber loaded with fuel and bombs was a unique experience. Take-offs in such circumstances posed additional risks, which had to be anticipated, while it was always challenging to land the aircraft smoothly and safely. During operations it was imperative to remain continually alert for all possible contingencies. Flying over enemy held territory raised the level of apprehension, which reached a very high level in the target area, especially where the enemy's response was intense.

It would be hard for the average person to calculate what a tour of thirty operations meant. Air Vice-Marshal D.C.T. Bennett, CB, CBE, DSO father of the Pathfinder Force writing in his book of that title, stated, "I believe that, particularly in the other Services, and indeed amongst the public, it is seldom appreciated that an ordinary bomber pilot was called upon to do about thirty operations and that each one of these operations was equivalent to a major battle which in either of the other two Services would be regarded as the experience of a life-time."

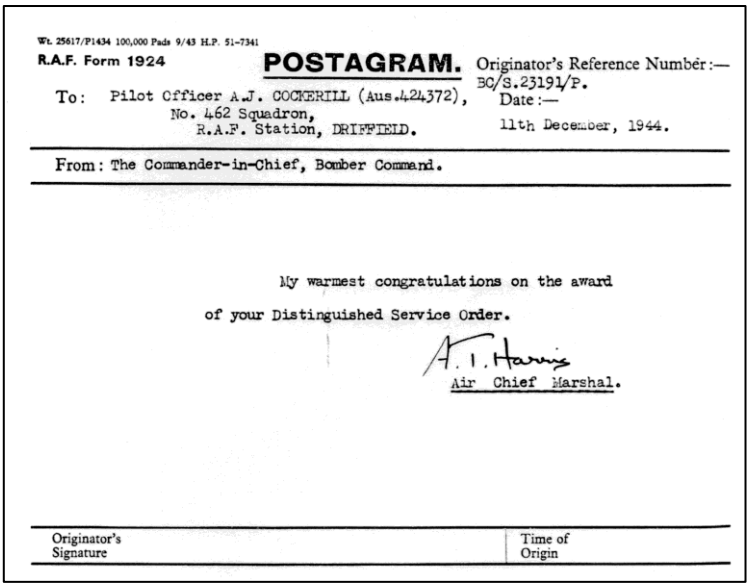
After completing about 20 ops, I noticed that on landing after each op I experienced quite severe headaches in both temples for about half an hour. About this time I also realised that I was smoking up to 40 cigarettes a day. Years later when discussing the matter of these headaches with someone who was in a position to know I was told that they were caused by stress. One didn't talk about personal health matters or report to a doctor for fear that it could affect one's operational future. In retrospect, I believe that my crew grew quieter as our tour of ops progressed.

Returning to Driffield I had a happy reunion with my crew. However, they were in a state of limbo with sagging morale not knowing what was going to happen to them. While it was often possible to replace a crew member other than a pilot, replacing a pilot was much more difficult. However, it wasn't long before the situation was resolved. The CO W/Cdr. Shannon returned to Australia to take up a position with Qantas Airways and a F/Lt. Peter M. Paull, DFC, Silver Star (USA), who had completed a tour in the Pacific area arrived and took over my crew. As he had not previously flown a Halifax he and my crew were posted to No. 1652 Conversion Unit located at Marston Moor to enable him to do a conversion course on Halifaxes. On completing the course and returning to Driffield F/Lt. Paull was promoted to the rank of squadron leader. On 27th December, 1944, 462 Squadron was posted to Foulsham, Norfolk as a member of the 100 Group where it was engaged in radio counter measures against the German defences. Following the departure of W/Cdr. Shannon, S/Ldr. Paull was promoted to the rank of W/Cdr. and became Commanding Officer of 462 Squadron. From F/Lt. to W/Cdr. in a few weeks – not bad! These machinations give cause to ponder on the axiom, "It's not what you know but who you know that matters."

I now had to take up accommodation in the Officers' Quarters. This was a building in which were a number of rooms with two beds to each room. At 07:00 a batwoman brought a cup of tea to each officer and later made the beds and tidied the room.

Early in my stay I was required to have an interview with an officer regarding awards for my crew. I was told at this interview that all my crew could not be recognised but only those who I considered most worthy. Given this direction I had no trouble in recommending awards for the Navigator, Henry Day and the Bomb Aimer, Syd Green. Both were awarded Distinguished Flying Medals (DFMs), which were duly promulgated several months later.

In due course I received congratulations on my award from Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur T. Harris, Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command and Air Vice-Marshal H.N. Wrigley, Air Officer Commanding RAAF Overseas Headquarters in London.



Wt. 25617/P1434 100,000 Pads 9/43 H.P. 51-7341

R.A.F. Form 1924 **POSTAGRAM.** Originator's Reference Number:— BC/S.23191/P.

To: Pilot Officer A.J. COCKERILL (Aus.424372), No. 462 Squadron, R.A.F. Station, DRIFFIELD.

Date:— 11th December, 1944.

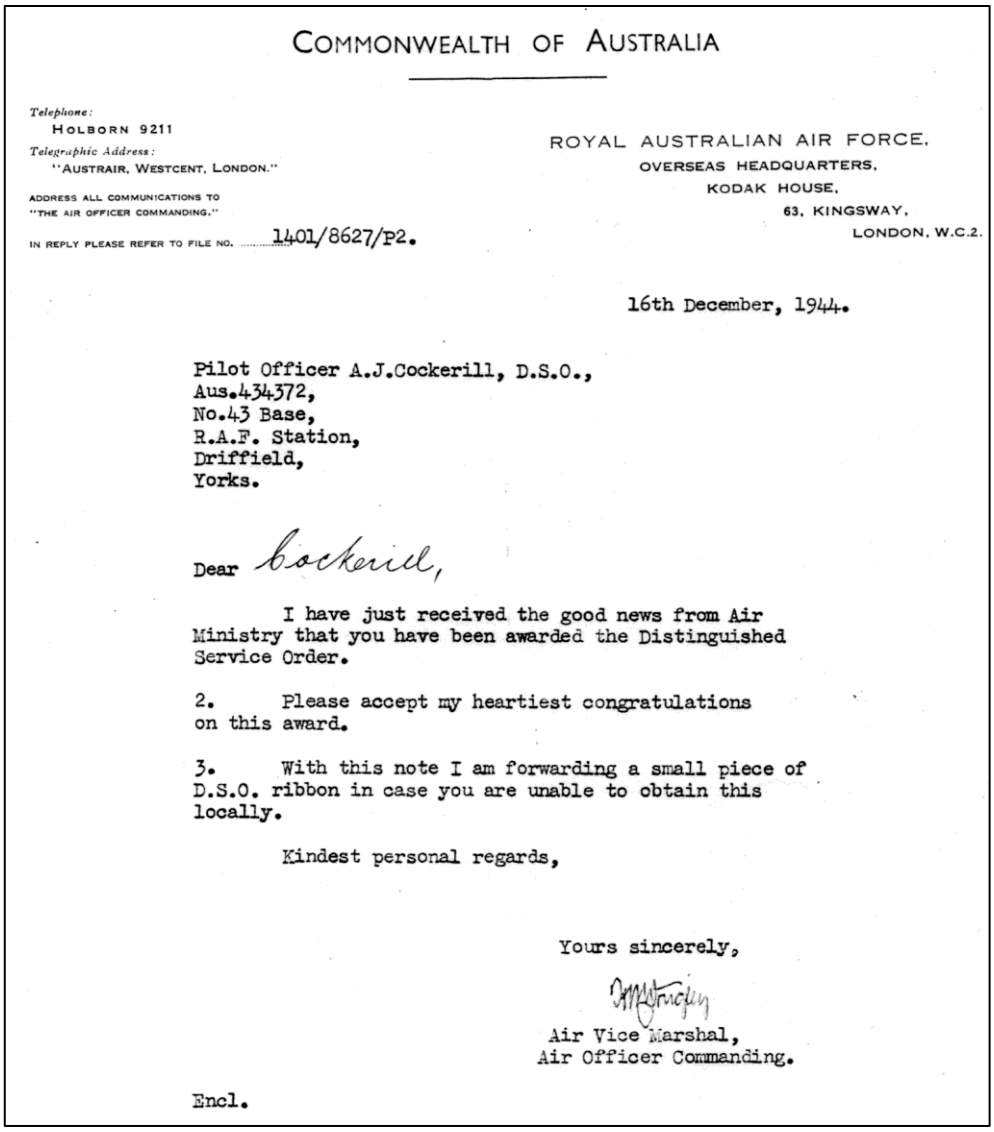
From: The Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command.

My warmest congratulations on the award of your Distinguished Service Order.

A. T. Harris
Air Chief Marshal.

Originator's Signature | Time of Origin

Figure 59: Postagram from RAF Air Chief Marshal A.T. Harris with congratulations on award of DSO.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Telephone:
HOLBORN 9211
Telegraphic Address:
"AUSTRAIR, WESTCENT, LONDON."

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
"THE AIR OFFICER COMMANDING."

IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO FILE NO. 1401/8627/P2.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE,
OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS,
KODAK HOUSE,
63, KINGSWAY,
LONDON, W.C.2.

16th December, 1944.

Pilot Officer A.J.Cockerill, D.S.O.,
Aus.434372,
No.43 Base,
R.A.F. Station,
Driffield,
Yorks.

Dear Cockerill,

I have just received the good news from Air Ministry that you have been awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

2. Please accept my heartiest congratulations on this award.

3. With this note I am forwarding a small piece of D.S.O. ribbon in case you are unable to obtain this locally.

Kindest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Air Vice Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding.

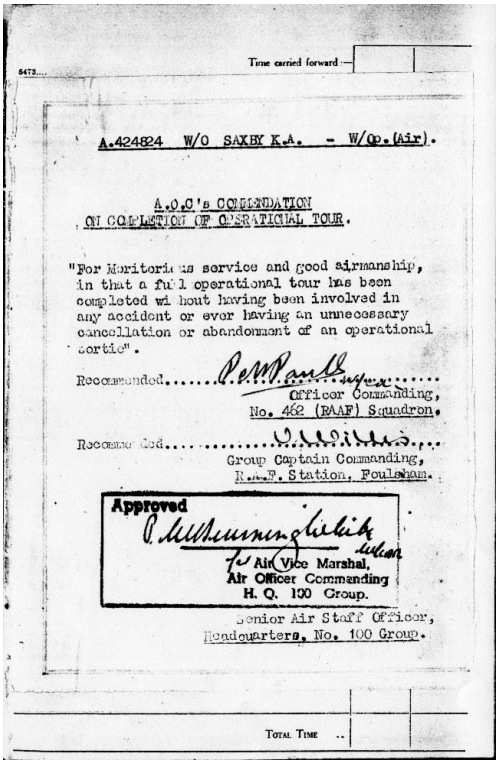
Encl.

Figure 60: Letter from RAAF Air Vice Marshal H.N. Wrigley with congratulations on award of DSO.

An official crew photo was taken.

Before leaving the station I obtained the home addresses of my crew so that I could keep in touch with them, which I have done down through the years. Bidding them farewell I wished them good luck for their future. Fortunately, they survived the war without injury.

While squadron commanders were not encouraged to participate in operations they exercised their option to do so, which meant that former members of my crew would have had some difficulty in completing an operational tour. However, the Wireless Operator, Ken Saxby was keen to complete a tour and often flew as a replacement W/Op or as a Special Duties Operator, whose activities were designed to interfere with the German defences. In due course Ken completed a tour and his Log Book was appropriately endorsed with the No. 100 Group Air Officer Commanding's (AOC's) commendation on completion of an operational tour.



Time carried forward

A.424824 W/O SAXBY K.A. - W/Op.(Air).

A.O.C.'s COMMENDATION
ON COMPLETION OF OPERATIONAL TOUR.

"For Meritorious service and good airmanship, in that a full operational tour has been completed without having been involved in any accident or ever having an unnecessary cancellation or abandonment of an operational sortie".

Recommended.....
Officer Commanding,
No. 462 (RAAF) Squadron.

Recommended.....
Group Captain Commanding,
R.A.F. Station, Foulsham.

Approved
for Air Vice Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding
H. Q. 100 Group.

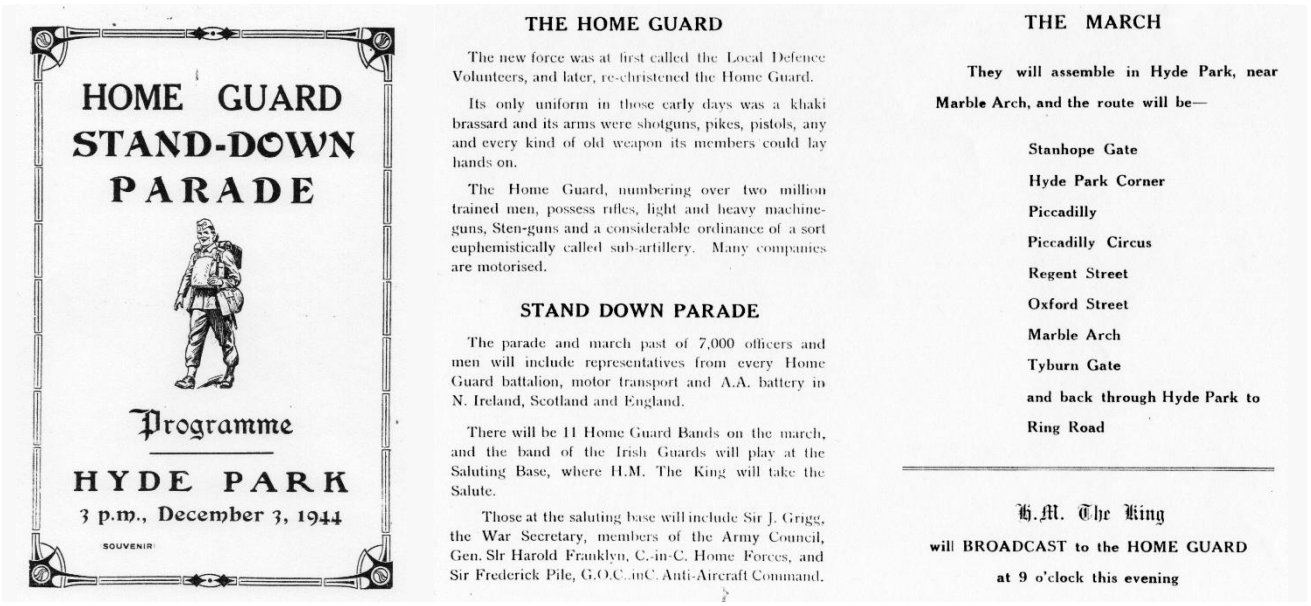
Senior Air Staff Officer,
Headquarters, No. 100 Group.

TOTAL TIME ..

Figure 61: Copy of Ken Saxby's Log Book with AOC's commendation on completion of operational tour.

Finalising matters at Driffield I took up the recommended 21 days' sick leave after which I was required to report to the Personnel Depot at Brighton pending repatriation to Australia.

The threat of invasion having passed the "powers-that-be" decided that the well-equipped and well organised Home Guard should be stood down. Accordingly on 3rd December, 1944 a massive march past of 7,000 officers and men was held in London when H.M. King George VI took the salute. H.M. Queen Elizabeth and the two Princesses were also on the dais. I had a very good view of the proceedings as I was standing directly opposite the saluting base.



HOME GUARD
STAND-DOWN
PARADE

Programme

HYDE PARK
3 p.m., December 3, 1944

SOUVENIR

THE HOME GUARD

The new force was at first called the Local Defence Volunteers, and later, re-christened the Home Guard.

Its only uniform in those early days was a khaki brassard and its arms were shotguns, pikes, pistols, any and every kind of old weapon its members could lay hands on.

The Home Guard, numbering over two million trained men, possess rifles, light and heavy machine-guns, Sten-guns and a considerable ordinance of a sort euphemistically called sub-artillery. Many companies are motorised.

STAND DOWN PARADE

The parade and march past of 7,000 officers and men will include representatives from every Home Guard battalion, motor transport and A.A. battery in N. Ireland, Scotland and England.

There will be 11 Home Guard Bands on the march, and the band of the Irish Guards will play at the Saluting Base, where H.M. The King will take the Salute.

Those at the saluting base will include Sir J. Grigg, the War Secretary, members of the Army Council, Gen. Sir Harold Franklyn, C.-in-C. Home Forces, and Sir Frederick Pile, G.O.C.-in-C. Anti-Aircraft Command.

THE MARCH

They will assemble in Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, and the route will be—

Stanhope Gate
Hyde Park Corner
Piccadilly
Piccadilly Circus
Regent Street
Oxford Street
Marble Arch
Tyburn Gate
and back through Hyde Park to
Ring Road

H.M. The King
will BROADCAST to the HOME GUARD
at 9 o'clock this evening

Figure 62: Programme of the Home Guard Stand-Down Parade at Hyde Park, 3rd December, 1944.

Postscript: Life After The War

This is the point where Bert's autobiographical account concludes, however the story is incomplete without a brief account of Bert's life after his service.

The citation for his Award of DSO (Immediate) was gazetted in London on Australia Day 26th January, 1945 and reads as follows:

Pilot Officer Albert John COCKERILL (Aus.424372) No.462 (R.A.A.F.)Squadron.

One night in October, 1944, this officer was pilot and captain of an aircraft detailed to attack Duisberg. When nearing the target the aircraft was illuminated in the searchlights and subjected to much anti-aircraft fire. A fragment of shrapnel, which tore through the windscreen, struck Pilot Officer Cockerill in the eye. The wound was severe. He momentarily lost consciousness. The aircraft went into a dive. Pilot Officer Cockerill recovered in time to level out and went on to complete the bombing run. The aircraft was still illuminated by the searchlights as he turned for home. Although weak from shock and loss of blood and in great physical distress, this brave pilot remained at the controls. He was unable to see his instruments but his air bomber stood by to give the necessary instructions. So assisted, Pilot Officer Cockerill flew the aircraft to an airfield in this country. Calling upon his last remaining strength he landed safely. By his skill, courage and fortitude this officer set an example of the highest order.

It was subsequently gazetted in the Commonwealth of Australia on 8th February, 1945. As noted in official release and printed by the press, this was the first DSO awarded to one of the Australian Bomber Squadrons. Bert was invested at a ceremony by the Governor General at Government House in Sydney on 13th April, 1946. Curiously, this citation refers to Bert's delivery of the bombs after he went into a dive and levelled out, whereas his own account above suggests that he released the bombs as soon as he was hit, to avoid being an explosive target – an interesting amendment to the official history.

Figure 63: Bert in Martin Place, Sydney, Investiture Day, 13th April, 1946.

With his war service over, Bert embarked on the journey to Australia on 19th January, 1945, arriving in Sydney on 21st February with a number of other returning servicemen. The next day, 22nd February, he travelled by rail to Casino on the *Sydney to Brisbane Express*.

He was greeted in Casino, a recognized hero; the community named a local park *Albert Park*, in his honour. However, like so many servicemen, he was more focused on getting about the business of life than re-living the past. While his service was a point of continued interest through ongoing connection with crew and the occasional reunion, it wasn't until later in life that he paid more attention to occasional recounting and then documenting of his experiences.

Bert and his fiancé, Joyce, married in 1946 at Casino. Meanwhile, Bert was busy with getting qualifications in his chosen field of dairy technology. He attended Hawkesbury Agricultural College attaining a Diploma in Dairying in November 1946, and then took up the role of Dairy Technologist in the laboratory at the Casino Co-op Dairy Society. Through this time, Bert was also busy in service work, particularly for Legacy with war widows. He and Joyce were soon the proud parents of two boys, Howard (born in 1950) and Ralph (1955).

After some time in Casino, Bert saw the opportunity to advance his career with a move to Hobart to work for the Tasmanian Agriculture Department as a Dairy Officer. He and Joyce were still hoping to grow their family, which eventuated in late 1960 with the birth of Linda. There followed a decade of raising family and working, which was rocked in 1970 with the tragic death of Howard in a car accident near Canberra, where he was living. The tumult continued with a

move, with career as its impetus, to Ulverstone in northwest Tasmania. Both Bert and Joyce settled into a rich life in Ulverstone as valued community members, particularly through continued service work. Bert was active in Rotary where he took leadership roles including President, and aided establishment of a second Ulverstone club. His Rotary service was recognized by a Paul Harris Fellowship in 1986. Joyce served in voluntary roles, including with an aged care auxiliary and with Red Cross.

After retirement, Bert was always occupied, with interests in family history, history of explorers and an accelerated interest in collating his war experiences. He was also busy with connections to ex-service groups particularly related to RAAF Squadrons 578 and 462.

HERALDIC DESCRIPTOR
NO 462 SQUADRON BADGE

On an RAAF Template surmounted by a Tudor Crown

Central Device: A circle Azure divided into thirds the upper two thirds in the dexter and the sinister with the remaining portion in the lower and divided by three narrow parallel lines abutted each of red, white and blue emanating from a centrally placed roundel of the same. In the upper dexter a palm tree fructed proper in the upper sinister a York Rose. In the lower a cubit arm dexter proper with four radiating bolts sable displayed from dexter to sinister.

Motto: *"Competence And Perseverance"*

Figure 64: Post-war 462 Squadron Badge that Bert helped to design.

One of the many tasks he immersed himself in was the creation, with the association of 466/462 Squadrons Reunion, of suitable stand-alone badges for the Squadrons. The Chief of the Air Force had requested separate 466 and 462 RAAF Squadron World War II crests and mottos suitable for installation as slate tiles in the floor of St Clement Danes Church, London, as neither Squadron had individual badges during the war. St Clement Danes Church is the 'Central Church' for the Royal Air Force and has over a thousand slate squadron and unit badges on its floor as a memorial: now including separate badges for both 462 and 466 Squadrons. Bert's role in the 462 badge was substantial and for those interested, the meaning of the elements is provided in the Appendix on p.170.

Bert passed away in 2008, survived by his wife Joyce, son Ralph and daughter Linda. Joyce moved to Brisbane shortly after to be closer to Ralph, and she passed away in 2020.

APPENDICES

A number of items of relevance were included in Bert's manuscript. Some of these are of poorer quality, are lengthy, or of lesser interest and so are collected here. Also included are some items not specifically identified by Bert himself, but which belong with the war account – including documents from his service and operational maps.

APPENDIX 1 – Early Miscellany

Potency of Japanese submariners hits home with unique exhibition

Midgets surface for posterity

By JAMES MORRISON

ALMOST 50 years ago nuts and bolts from the two Japanese midget submarines recovered from Sydney Harbour after the raid on May 31, 1942, were sold as souvenirs.

The rest remained public property, sitting outside the Australian War Memorial in Canberra for 40 years. The decision to restore them was only made in 1985.

However, because of limited space, the midships area of the submarine (it was reconstructed from two of the three vessels used in the attack), was kept stored away at the memorial.

Early next month the conning tower and control area of the submarine will go on display for the first time at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. The submarine has been lent to the museum until January.

It will be the centrepiece of the museum's Hitting Home exhibition, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the raid, in which all six Japanese submariners and 19 Allied sailors died.

On the night of May 31 the museum and the Royal Australian Navy will hold a mock battle on the harbour to mark the anniversary.

● Ms Fisher yesterday with the reassembled midget submarine, centrepiece of the exhibition, 50 years after it first arrived in Sydney — Picture: GEOFF BEATTY

The curator of the exhibition, Ms Marlea Fisher, said yesterday that the submarine was a "potent symbol" in the Allies' propaganda campaign.

Despite the bombing of Darwin on February 19, 1942, in which almost 250 people were killed, most Australians did not realise the country was directly threatened by war.

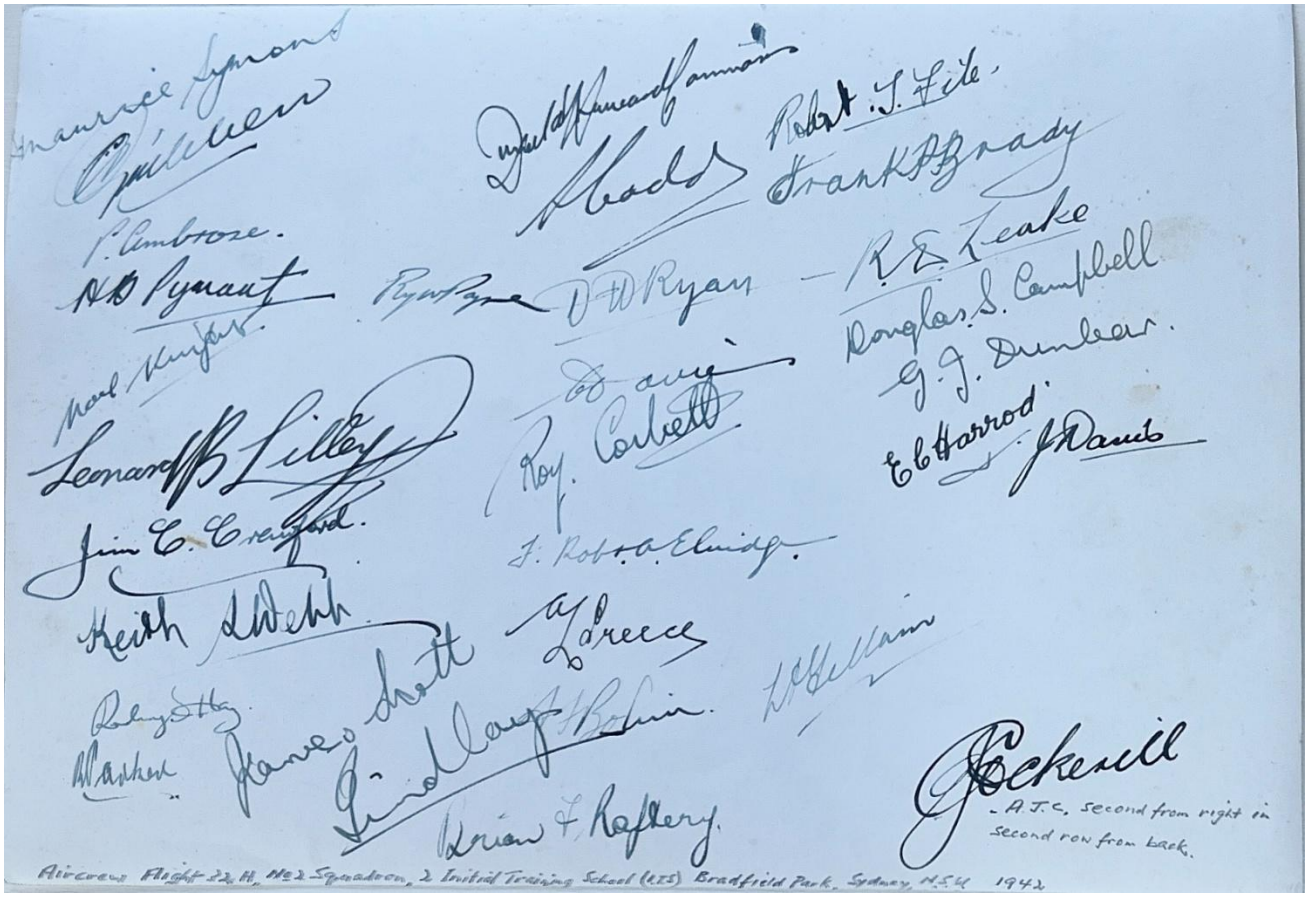
The Curtin Labor government therefore used the submarines as a tool to boost war production, sending them on a 4000km-tour of the south-eastern States.

A popular misconception of the Japanese midget submarines is that they were tiny.

Although the two-man crew operated in cramped conditions, the submarines were 23.9m long, 1.85m in diameter and weighed 46.2 tonnes.

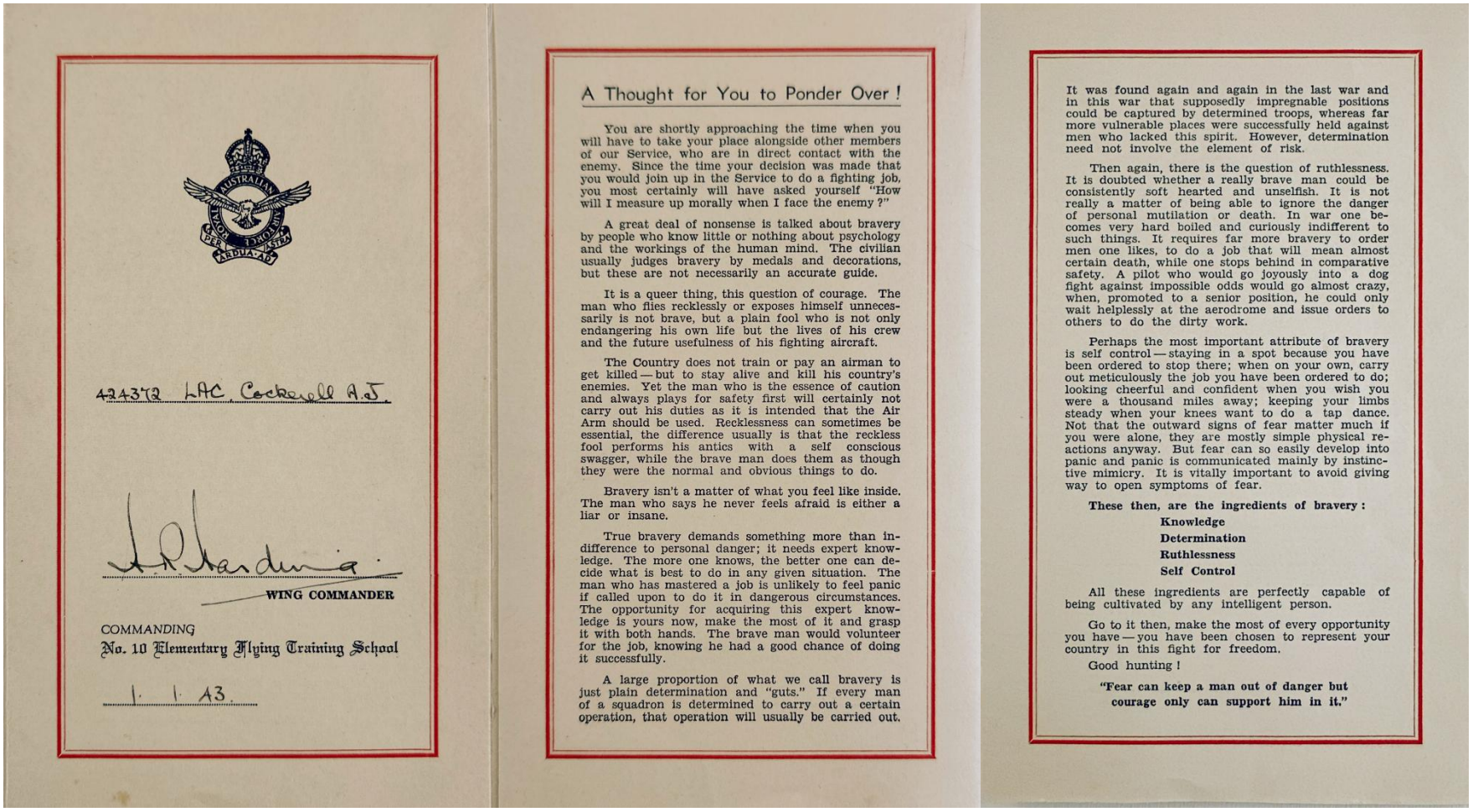
The Australian 14/7-5-1992

1: News clipping about Japanese submarines.
Referred to in main text at p.20


Maurice Symons
P. Ambrose.
Robert J. Fite.
Frank P. Brady
D. D. Ryan
R. E. Teake
Douglas S. Campbell
G. J. Dunbar.
E. C. Harrod.
Roy. Corbett
Leonard B. Lilley
Jim E. Crawford.
Keith L. Webb.
Kevin F. Raftery.
- A.J.C. second from right in second row from back.
Aircrew Flight 32H, No 2 Squadron, 2 Initial Training School (RAS) Bradfield Park, Sydney, N.S.W. 1942

2: Signed reverse of photo of members of Flight 32H, No. 2 Squadron, No. 2 Initial Training School, Bradfield Park. Corresponds to photograph in main text. (p.29)

APPENDIX 2 – Treatise on Bravery



423473 LAC Cockerell A.J.

WING COMMANDER

COMMANDING
No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School

1. 1. 43.

A Thought for You to Ponder Over !

You are shortly approaching the time when you will have to take your place alongside other members of our Service, who are in direct contact with the enemy. Since the time your decision was made that you would join up in the Service to do a fighting job, you most certainly will have asked yourself "How will I measure up morally when I face the enemy ?"

A great deal of nonsense is talked about bravery by people who know little or nothing about psychology and the workings of the human mind. The civilian usually judges bravery by medals and decorations, but these are not necessarily an accurate guide.

It is a queer thing, this question of courage. The man who flies recklessly or exposes himself unnecessarily is not brave, but a plain fool who is not only endangering his own life but the lives of his crew and the future usefulness of his fighting aircraft.

The Country does not train or pay an airman to get killed — but to stay alive and kill his country's enemies. Yet the man who is the essence of caution and always plays for safety first will certainly not carry out his duties as it is intended that the Air Arm should be used. Recklessness can sometimes be essential, the difference usually is that the reckless fool performs his antics with a self conscious swagger, while the brave man does them as though they were the normal and obvious things to do.

Bravery isn't a matter of what you feel like inside. The man who says he never feels afraid is either a liar or insane.

True bravery demands something more than indifference to personal danger; it needs expert knowledge. The more one knows, the better one can decide what is best to do in any given situation. The man who has mastered a job is unlikely to feel panic if called upon to do it in dangerous circumstances. The opportunity for acquiring this expert knowledge is yours now, make the most of it and grasp it with both hands. The brave man would volunteer for the job, knowing he had a good chance of doing it successfully.

A large proportion of what we call bravery is just plain determination and "guts." If every man of a squadron is determined to carry out a certain operation, that operation will usually be carried out.

It was found again and again in the last war and in this war that supposedly impregnable positions could be captured by determined troops, whereas far more vulnerable places were successfully held against men who lacked this spirit. However, determination need not involve the element of risk.

Then again, there is the question of ruthlessness. It is doubted whether a really brave man could be consistently soft hearted and unselfish. It is not really a matter of being able to ignore the danger of personal mutilation or death. In war one becomes very hard boiled and curiously indifferent to such things. It requires far more bravery to order men one likes, to do a job that will mean almost certain death, while one stops behind in comparative safety. A pilot who would go joyously into a dog fight against impossible odds would go almost crazy, when, promoted to a senior position, he could only wait helplessly at the aerodrome and issue orders to others to do the dirty work.

Perhaps the most important attribute of bravery is self control — staying in a spot because you have been ordered to stop there; when on your own, carry out meticulously the job you have been ordered to do; looking cheerful and confident when you wish you were a thousand miles away; keeping your limbs steady when your knees want to do a tap dance. Not that the outward signs of fear matter much if you were alone, they are mostly simple physical reactions anyway. But fear can so easily develop into panic and panic is communicated mainly by instinctive mimicry. It is vitally important to avoid giving way to open symptoms of fear.

These then, are the ingredients of bravery :

Knowledge
Determination
Ruthlessness
Self Control

All these ingredients are perfectly capable of being cultivated by any intelligent person.

Go to it then, make the most of every opportunity you have — you have been chosen to represent your country in this fight for freedom.

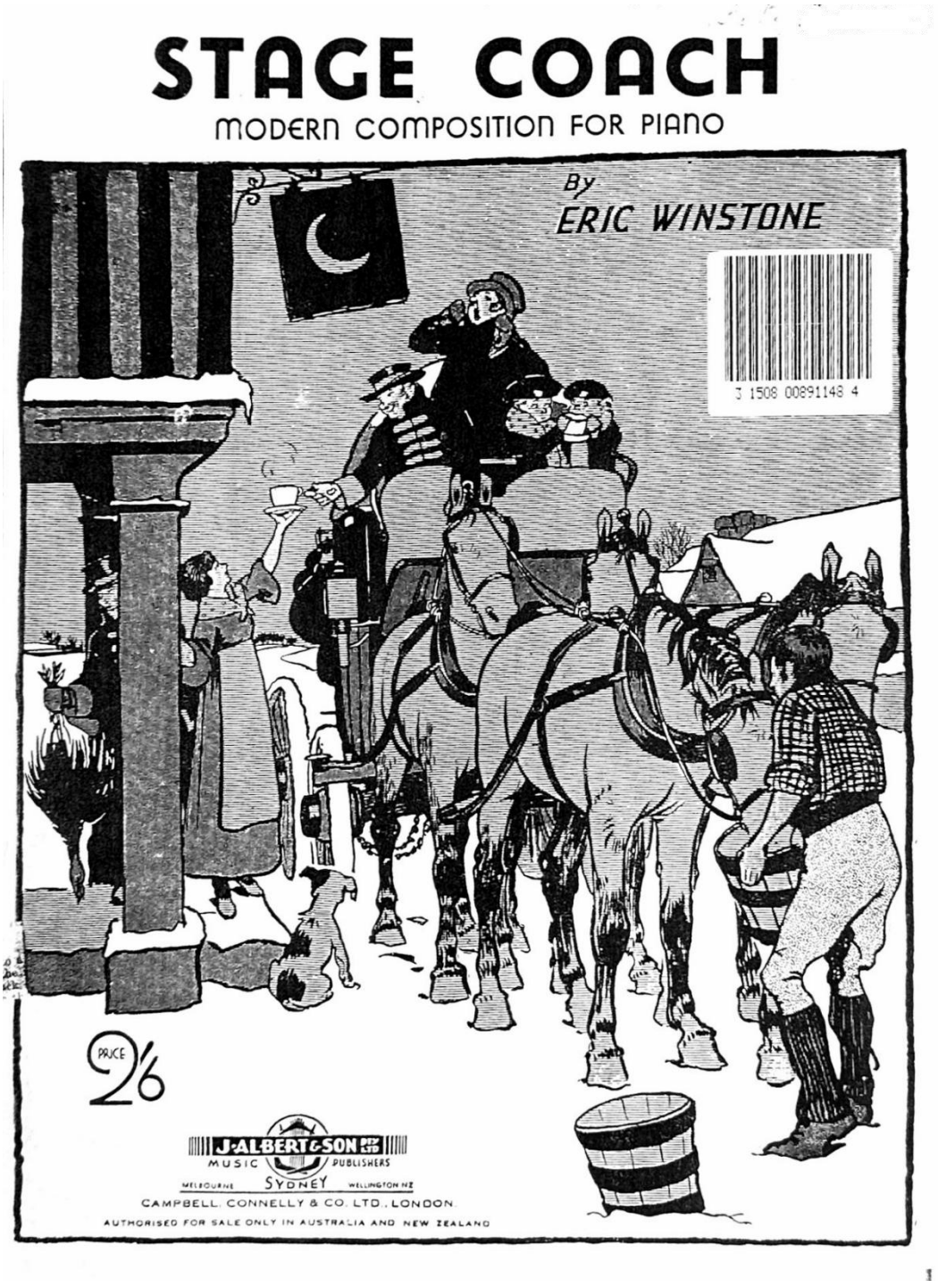
Good hunting !

"Fear can keep a man out of danger but courage only can support him in it."

3: Pamphlet handed out on completion of EFTS course. See p.39

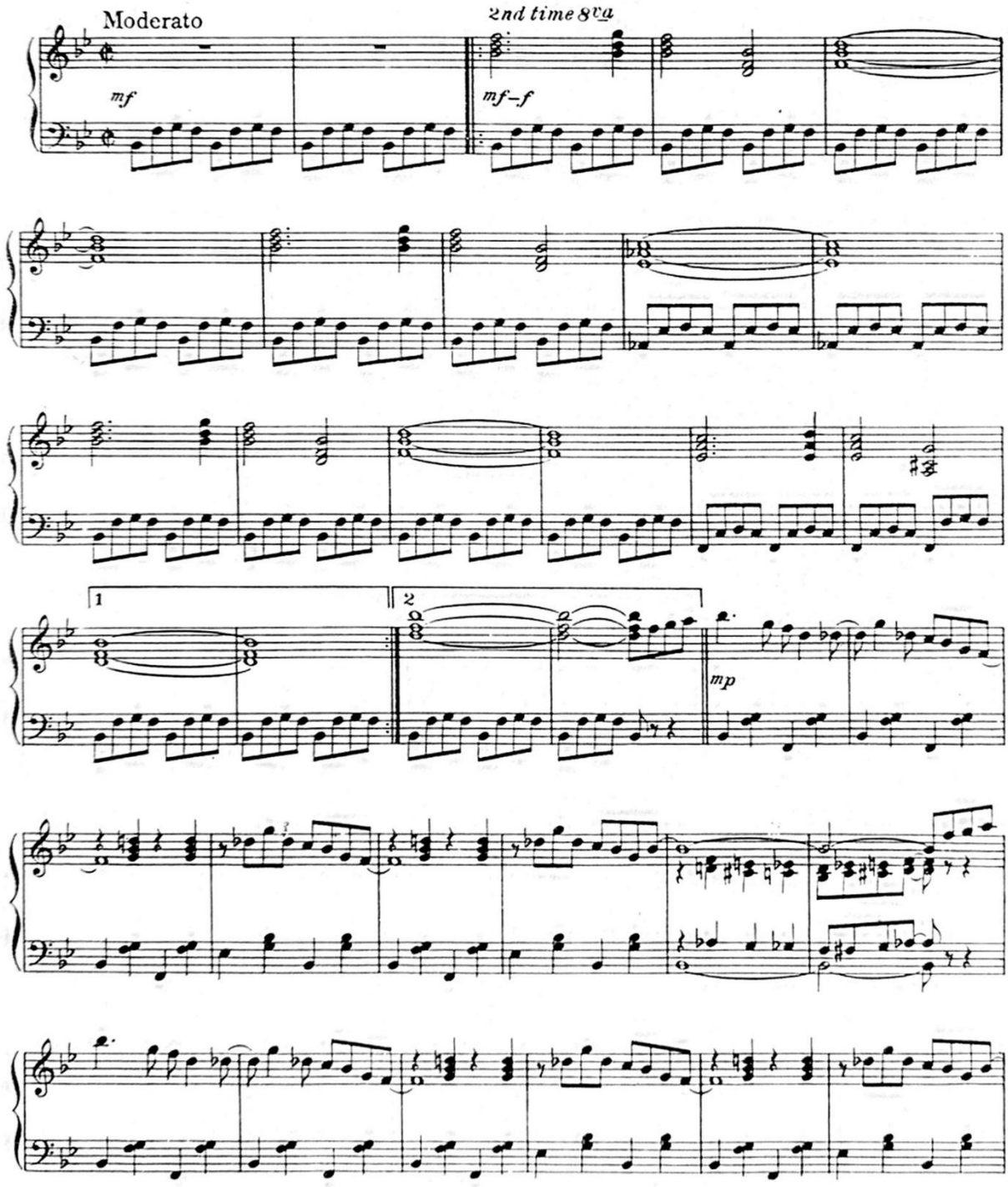
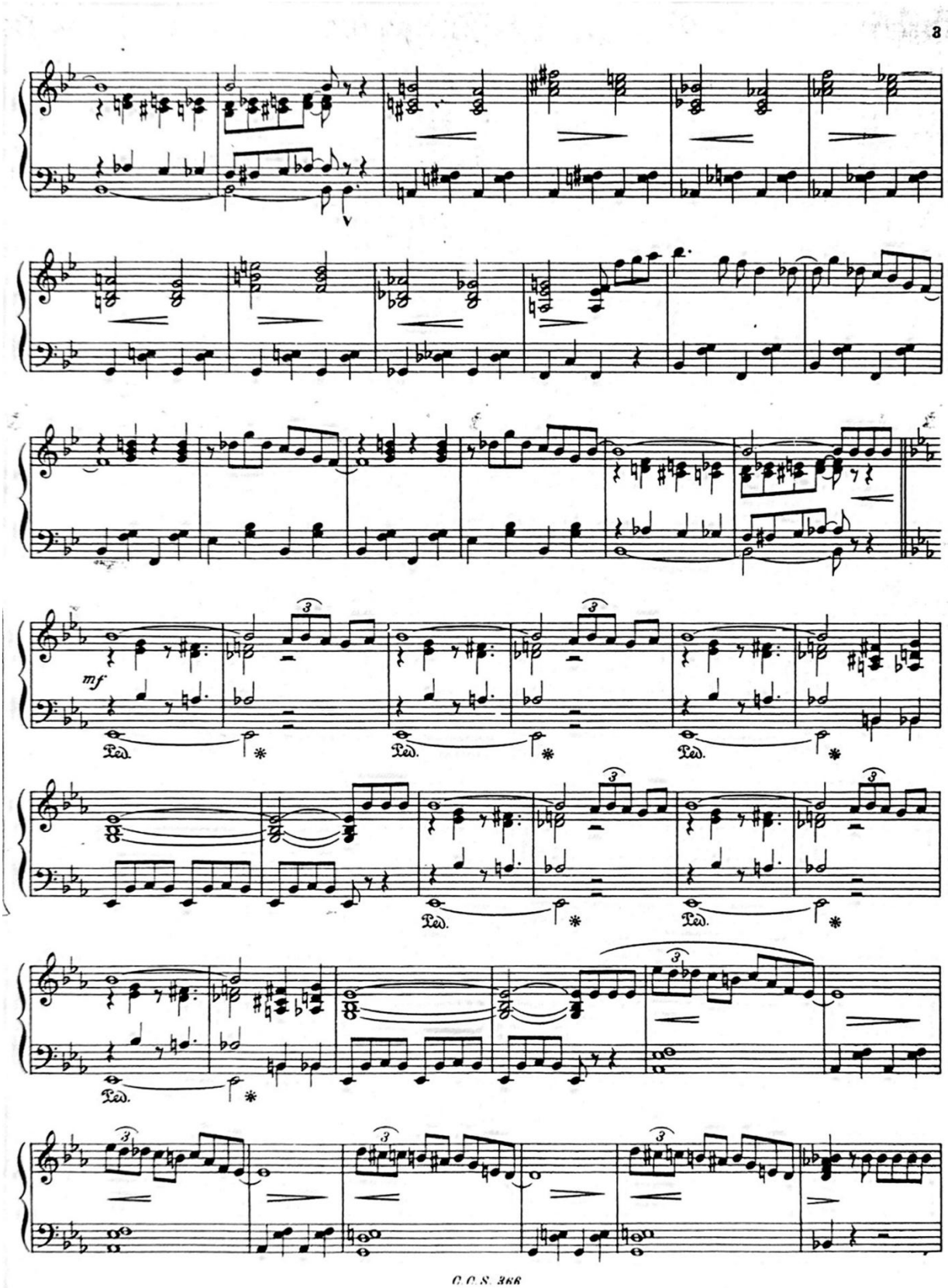
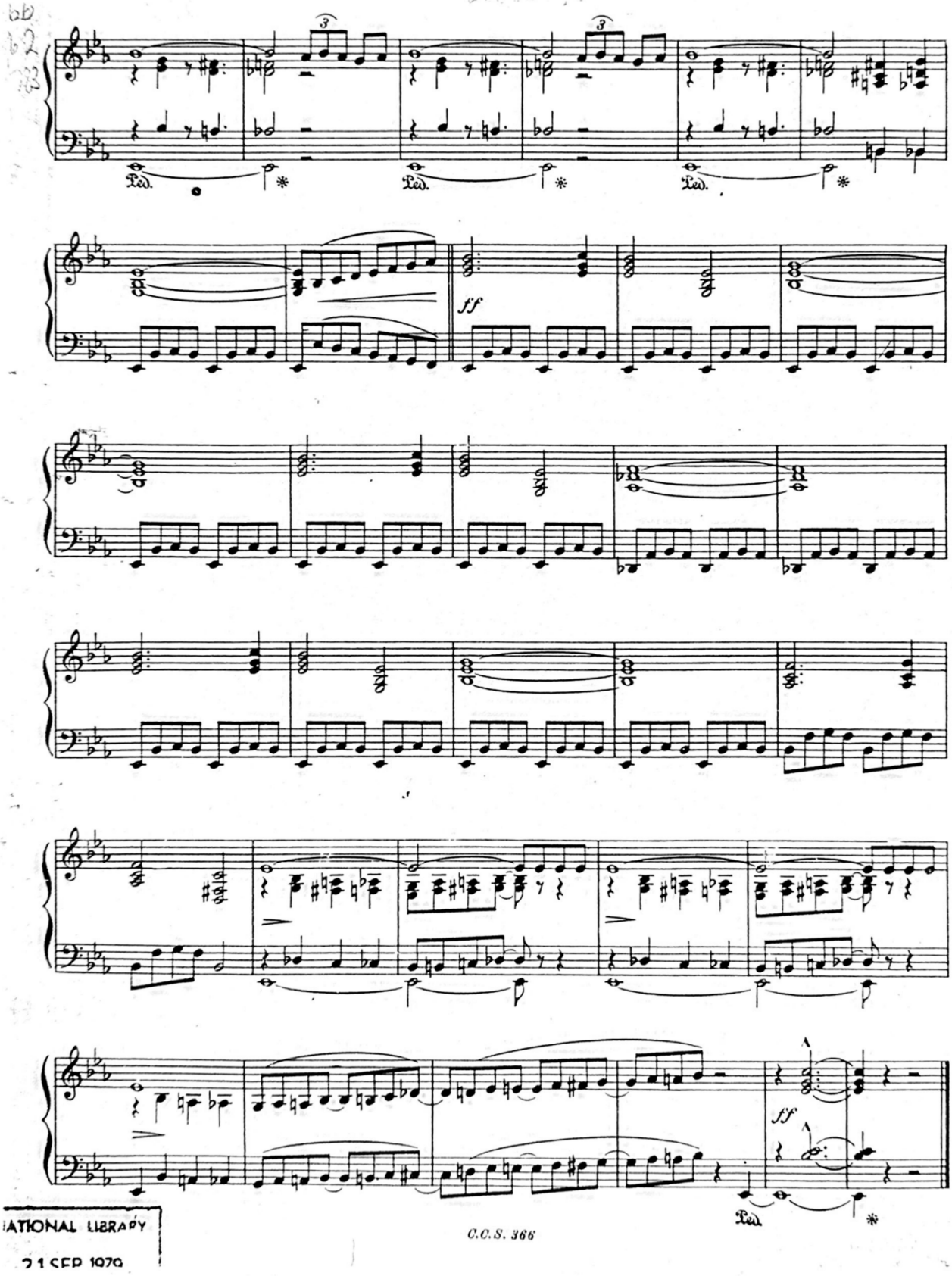
APPENDIX 3 – "Stage Coach"

The interested listener can hear Eric Winstone and his band from a 78 recording at the following internet address: https://archive.org/details/78_stage-coach_eric-winstone-and-his-band-eric-winstone_gbia0539044a



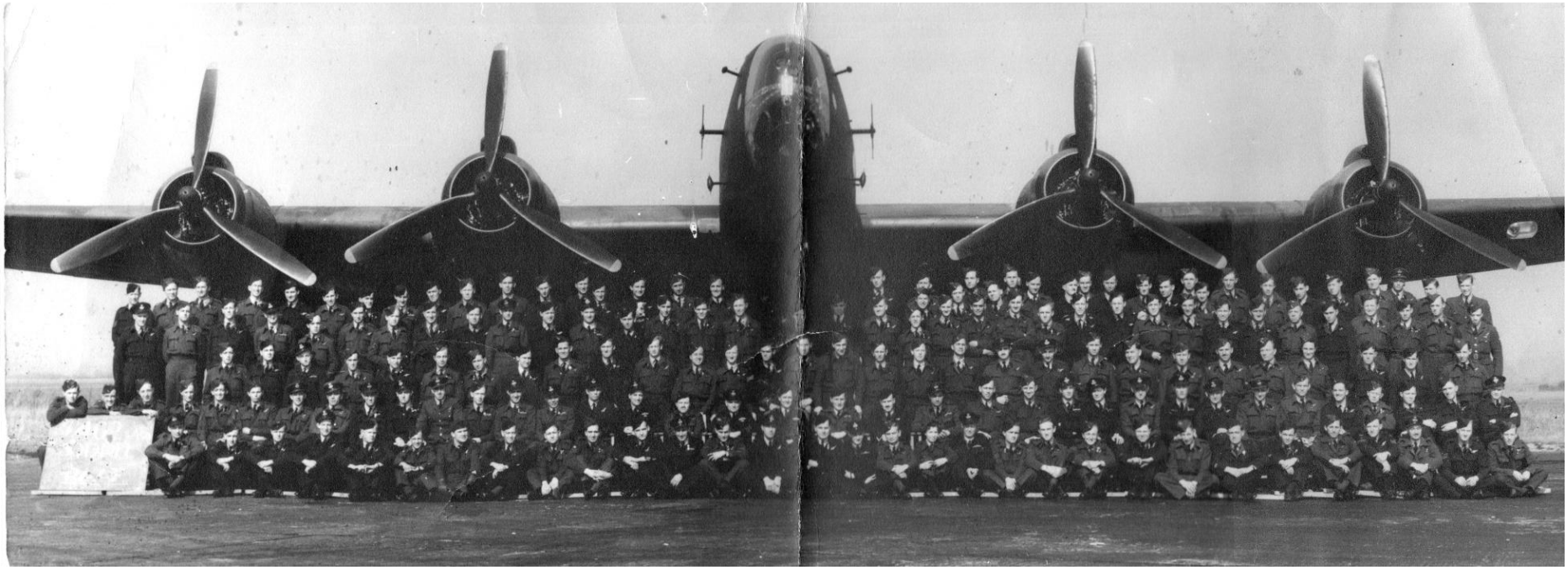
4: Music for Stage Coach *referred to at page 87.*

STAGE COACH

ERIC WINSTONE

International Copyright Secured *All Rights Reserved*
Copyright MCMXLI for all Countries by Campbell, Connelly & Co. Ltd. 10, Denmark St. London, W.C.2 *C.C.S. 366*
Anyone making manuscript copies or any arrangements of this work without permission infringes copyright and is liable to legal proceedings

mf
Ped.
*

ATIONAL LIBRARY
21 SEP 1970

C.C.S. 366

APPENDIX 4 – 462 Squadron Photo with Halifax



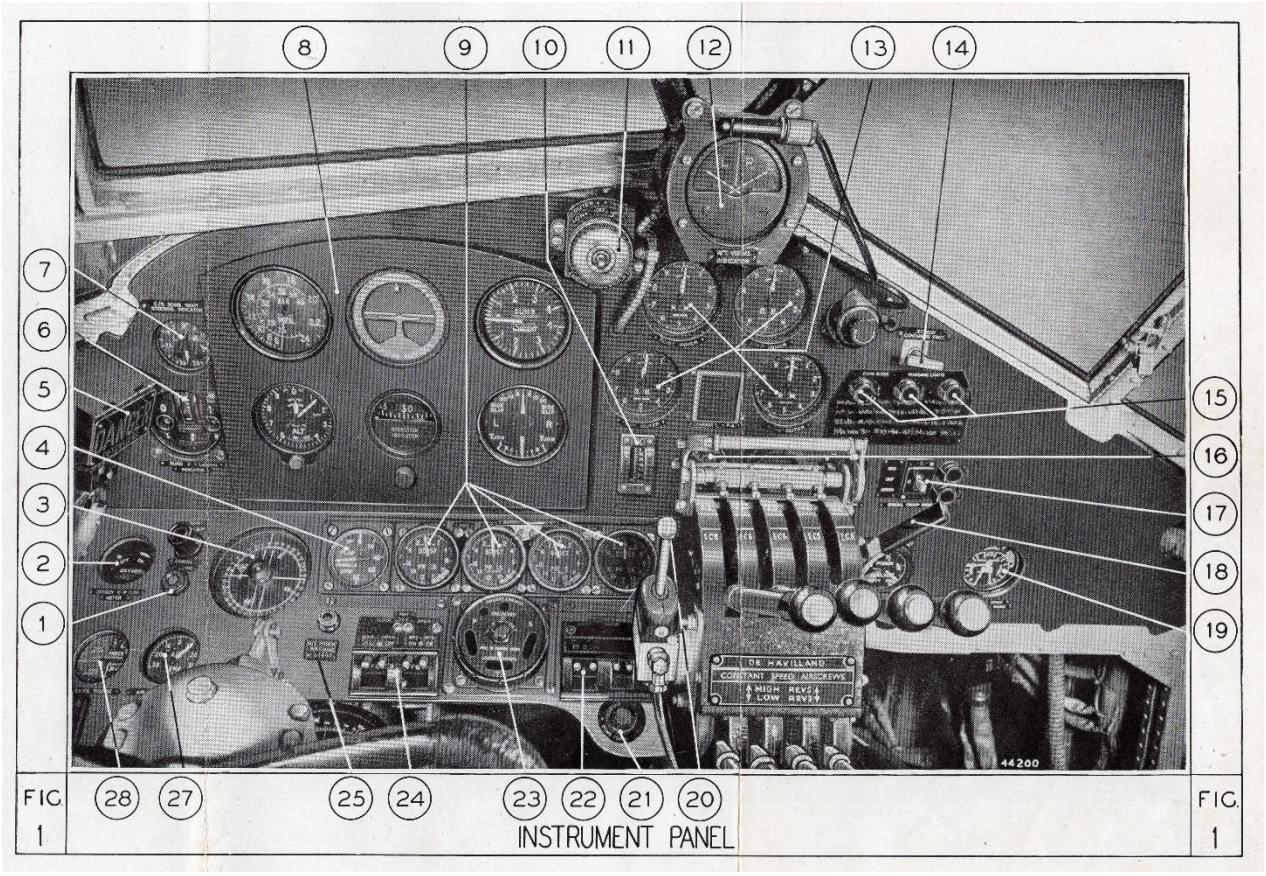
5: 462 Squadron Photo 1945.

This photograph was taken after Bert ceased service with the Squadron, however, the picture is included as it illustrates the sheer size of the aircraft.

APPENDIX 5 – Pictures from the *Pilot's and Engineer's Notes Halifax III*

The following pictures are extracted from the booklet entitled *Pilot's and Engineer's Notes Halifax III.* These are noted in the main text with an additional picture of the Halifax III itself (p.97).

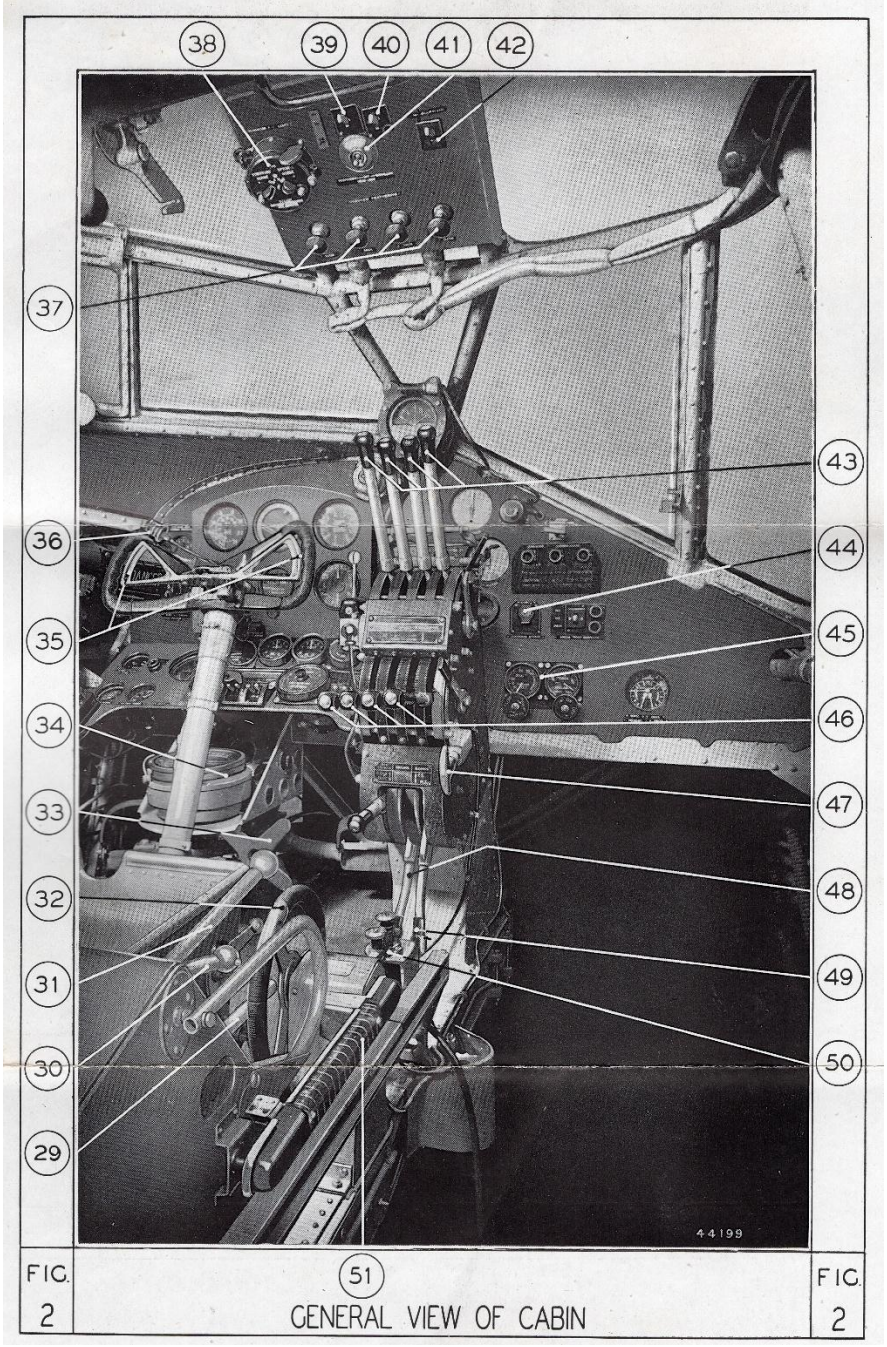
6: Pilot's and Flight Engineer's Notes *cover.*



Key to *Fig. 1*

INSTRUMENT PANEL

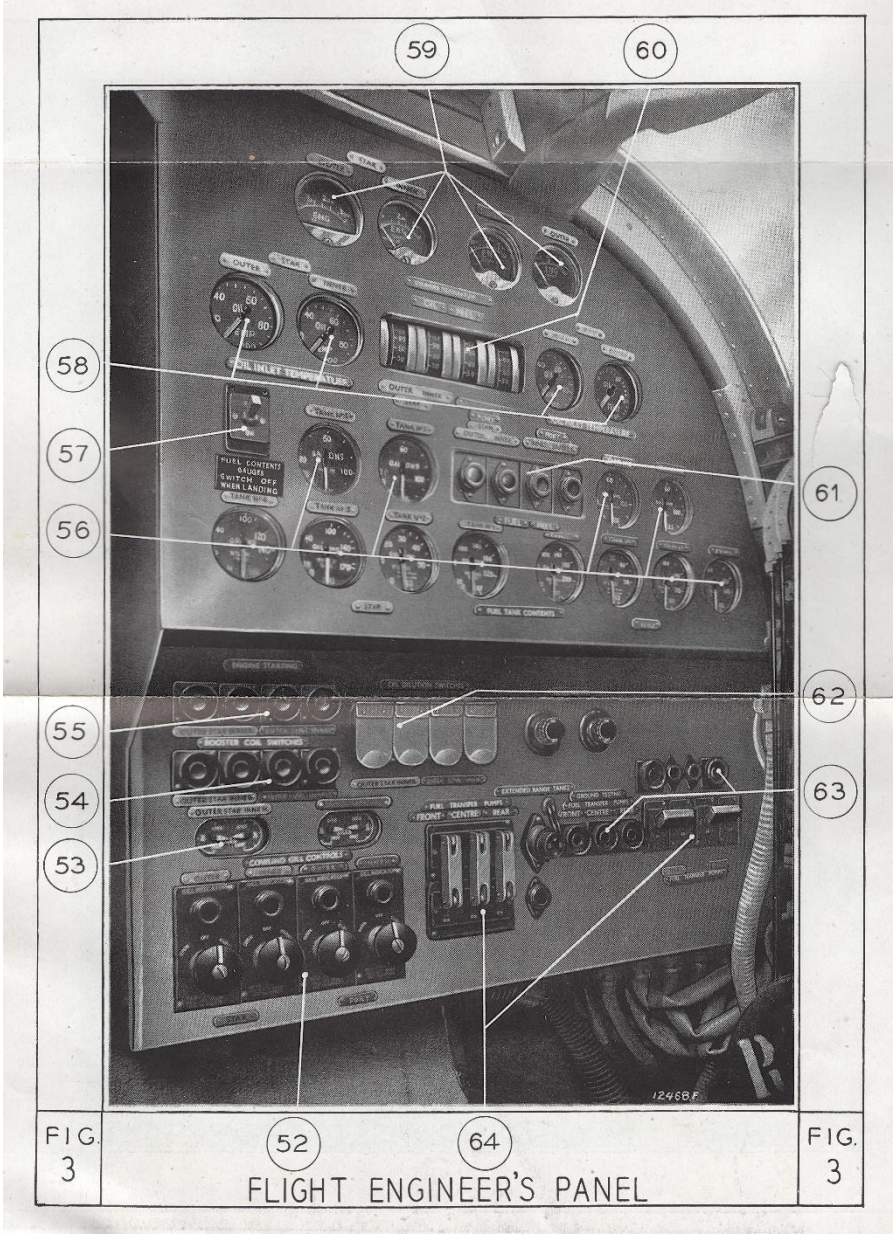
1. Camera warning light
2. Oxygen flow meter
3. D.R. compass repeater
4. Flaps indicator
5. A.R.I. destruction switches (under cover)
6. Beam approach indicator
7. Bomb steering indicator
8. Instrument flying panel
9. Boost gauges
10. Suction gauge
11. Landing lamp switch
12. D.F. indicator
13. Engine-speed indicators
14. Bomb jettison handle
15. Bomb doors warning lights
16. Suction changeover cock
17. Troop signalling lamps and switch
18. Throttle friction adjusting lever
19. Brakes and supply pressure gauge
20. Landing lamps dipping lever
21. Bomb-firing switch
22. Starboard ignition switches
23. Undercarriage indicator
24. Port ignition switches
25. Horn warning light
27. Air temperature gauge
28. Auto-pilot pressure and trim gauge



Key to *Fig. 2*

GENERAL VIEW OF CABIN

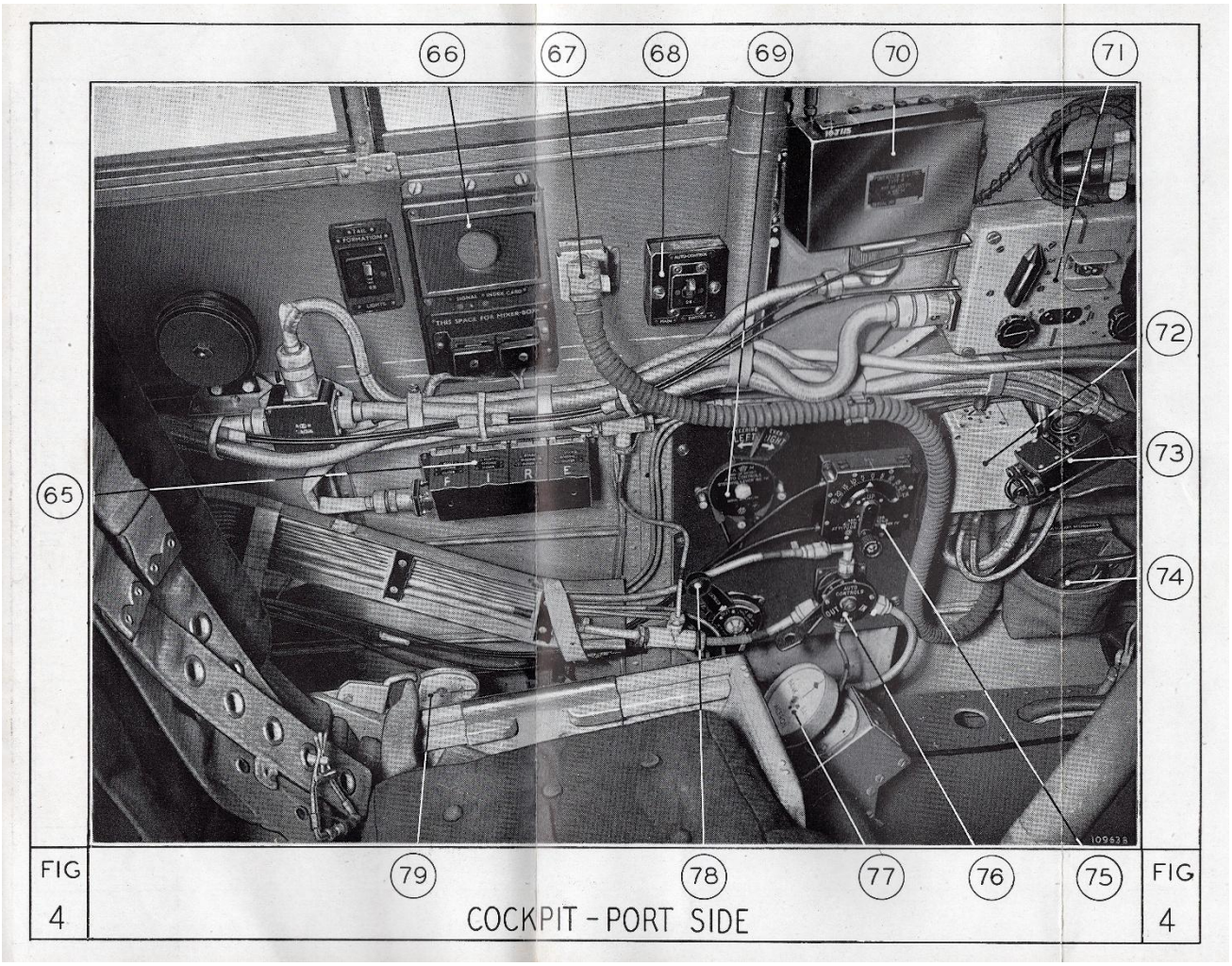
29. Undercarriage lever
30. Flaps lever
31. Bomb doors lever
32. Elevator trimming tab control
33. Rudder pedals adjusting starwheel
34. Compass
35. Wheel brakes lever
36. "Press to transmit" switch
37. Feathering buttons
38. Recognition lights switchbox
39. Navigation lights switch
40. Pressure-head heater switch
41. Headlamp switch
42. Formation lights switch
43. Throttle levers
44. Bomb containers jettison switch
45. Oxygen regulator
46. Propeller speed control levers
47. Glider release control
48. Mixture lever
49. Superchargers control
50. Windscreen de-icing pump
51. Elevator trimming tab indicator



Key to *Fig. 3*

FLIGHT ENGINEER'S PANEL

52. Cowling gills, motor controls and indicators
53. Gills position indicators
54. Booster-coil buttons
55. Engine starting buttons
56. Fuel contents gauges
57. Fuel contents gauges switch
58. Oil temperature gauges
59. Cylinder temperature gauges
60. Oil pressure gauges
61. Fuel pressure warning lights
62. Oil dilution switches
63. Fuel transfer pumps ground testing buttons
64. Immersed pump switches



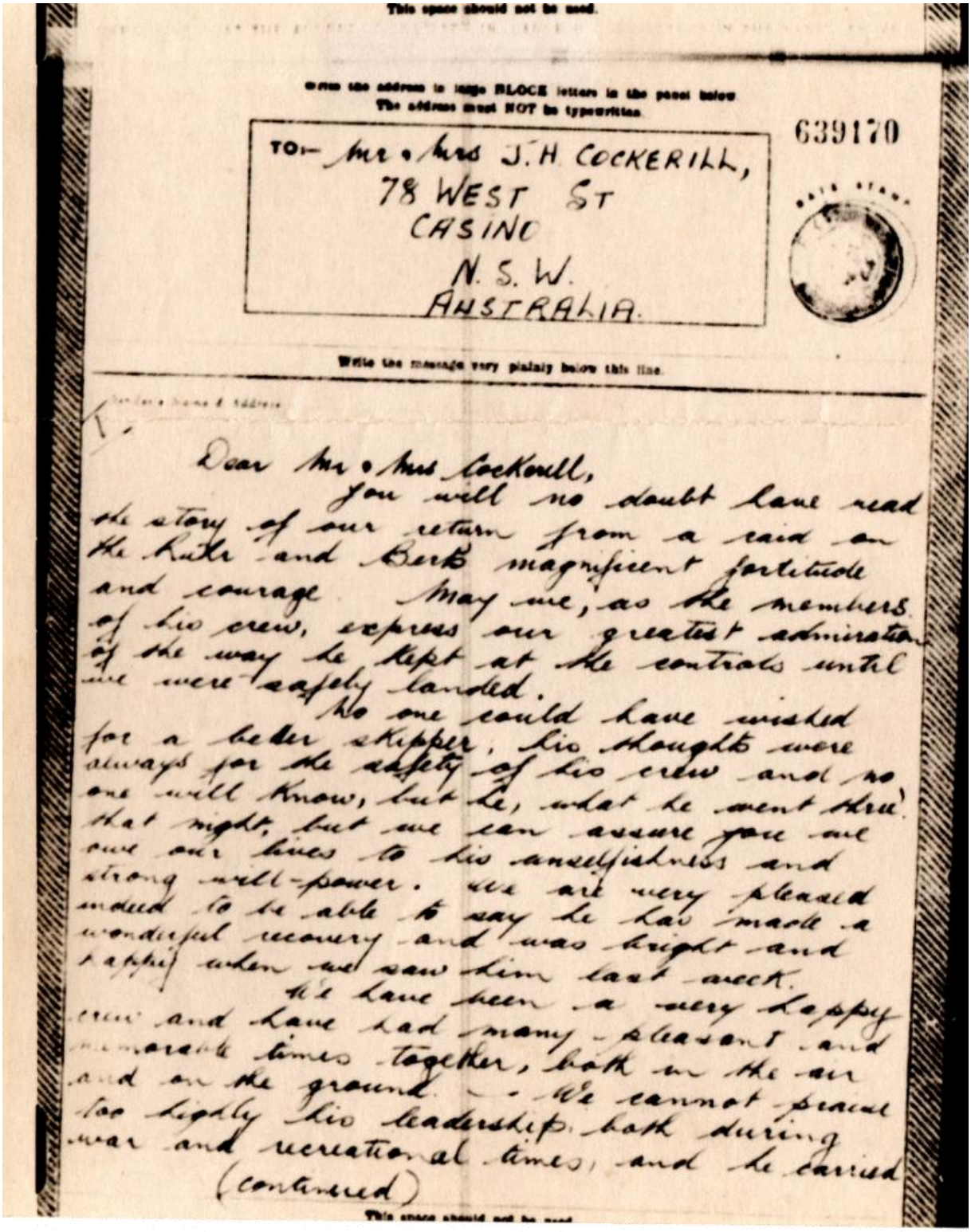
Key to *Fig. 4*

COCKPIT—PORT SIDE

65. Fire-extinguisher pushbuttons
66. Signal index card holder
67. Pilot's oxygen connection
68. Auto-pilot main switch
69. Auto-pilot steering lever
70. T.R.1196 control box
71. Beam approach control unit
72. Beam approach mixer box
73. Pilot's call light
74. Heater socket stowage
75. Auto-pilot attitude control
76. Auto-pilot control cock
77. Aileron trimming tab control
78. Auto-pilot clutch lever
79. Rudder trimmer tabs control

APPENDIX 6 – Crew Letter Airgraph

As noted in the main text on p.137, Bert's crew sent the following "Airgraph" to his parents in Casino.



This space should not be used.

Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below
The address must NOT be typewritten.

639170

TO:- Mr & Mrs J.H. COCKERILL,
78 WEST ST
CASINO
N.S.W.
AUSTRALIA.

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Dear Mr & Mrs Cockerill,

You will no doubt have read the story of our return from a raid on the Ruhr and Bert's magnificent fortitude and courage. May we, as the members of his crew, express our greatest admiration of the way he kept at the controls until we were safely landed.

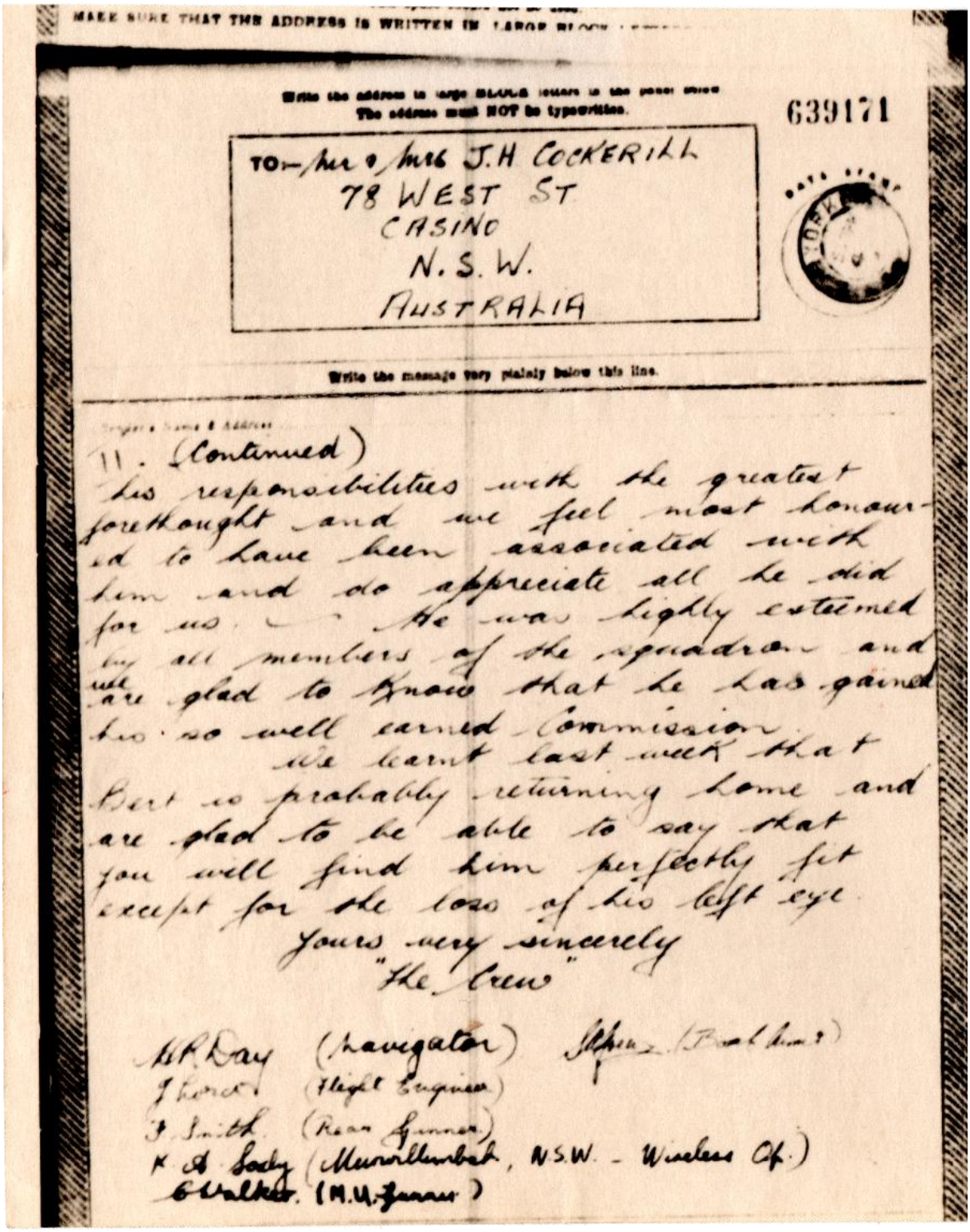
No one could have wished for a better skipper. His thoughts were always for the safety of his crew and no one will know, but he, what he went thru' that night, but we can assure you we owe our lives to his unselfishness and strong will-power. We are very pleased indeed to be able to say he has made a wonderful recovery and was bright and happy when we saw him last week.

We have been a very happy crew and have had many pleasant and memorable times together, both in the air and on the ground. We cannot praise too highly his leadership both during war and recreational times, and he carried

(continued)

This space should not be used.

7: Crew letter to Bert's parents in Casino (p1).



MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK ...

Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the space below
The address must NOT be typewritten.

639171

TO— Mr & Mrs J.H COCKERILL
78 WEST ST
CASINO
N.S.W.
AUSTRALIA

Write the message very plainly below this line.

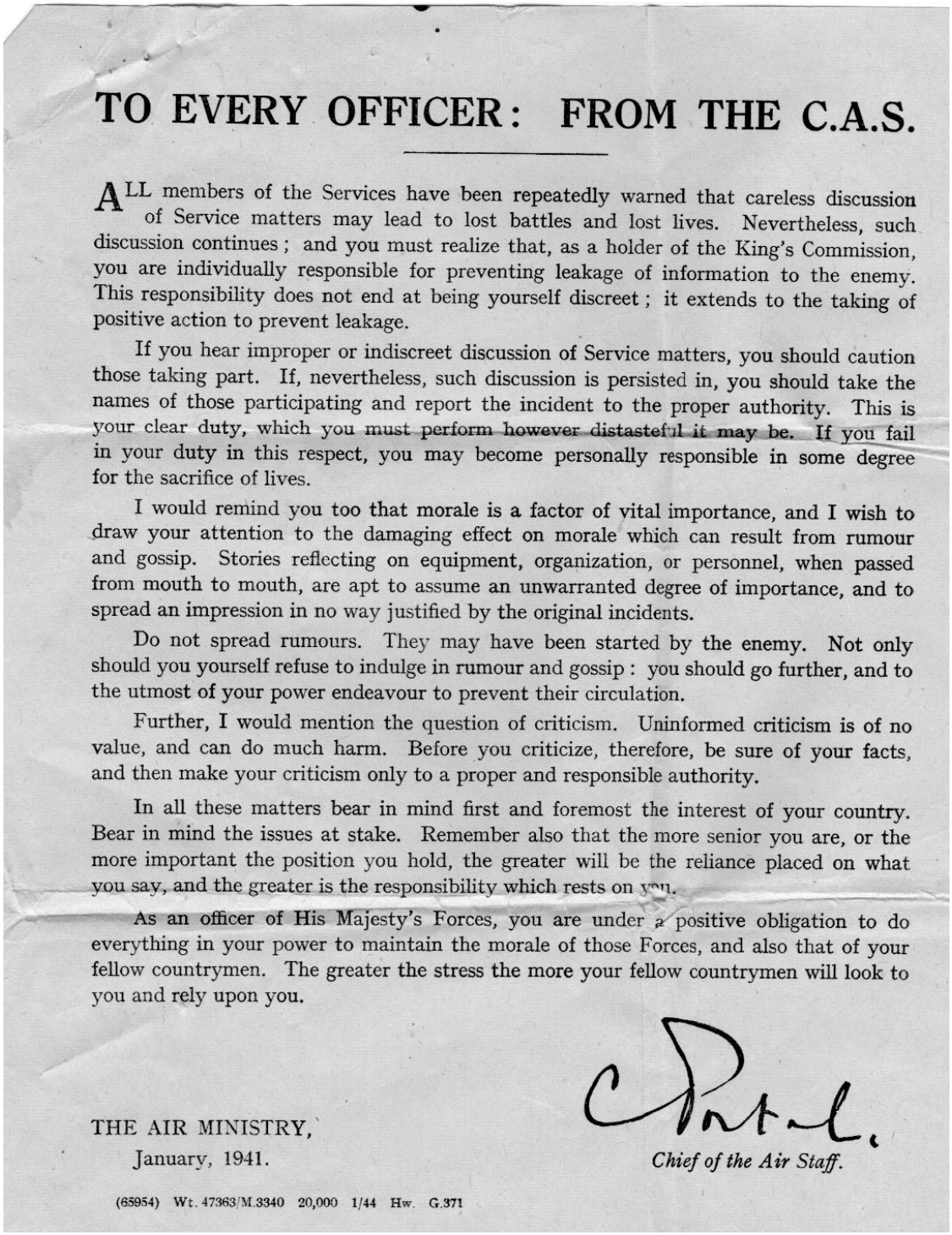
11. (Continued)
his responsibilities with the greatest forethought and we feel most honoured to have been associated with him and do appreciate all he did for us. He was highly esteemed by all members of the squadron and we are glad to know that he has gained his so well earned commission.
We learnt last week that Bert is probably returning home and are glad to be able to say that you will find him perfectly fit except for the loss of his left eye.
Yours very sincerely
"The Crew"

M.P. Day (Navigator) [illegible] (Pilot)
J Ford (Flight Engineer)
J. Smith (Rear Gunner)
K A Sadler (Murwillumbah, N.S.W. - Wireless Op.)
C Walker (M.U. Gunner)

Crew letter (p2).

APPENDIX 7 – Miscellaneous Papers

This letter accompanies the notification that Bert was a Pilot Officer, as shown on p.140.



TO EVERY OFFICER: FROM THE C.A.S.

ALL members of the Services have been repeatedly warned that careless discussion of Service matters may lead to lost battles and lost lives. Nevertheless, such discussion continues; and you must realize that, as a holder of the King's Commission, you are individually responsible for preventing leakage of information to the enemy. This responsibility does not end at being yourself discreet; it extends to the taking of positive action to prevent leakage.

If you hear improper or indiscreet discussion of Service matters, you should caution those taking part. If, nevertheless, such discussion is persisted in, you should take the names of those participating and report the incident to the proper authority. This is your clear duty, which you must perform however distasteful it may be. If you fail in your duty in this respect, you may become personally responsible in some degree for the sacrifice of lives.

I would remind you too that morale is a factor of vital importance, and I wish to draw your attention to the damaging effect on morale which can result from rumour and gossip. Stories reflecting on equipment, organization, or personnel, when passed from mouth to mouth, are apt to assume an unwarranted degree of importance, and to spread an impression in no way justified by the original incidents.

Do not spread rumours. They may have been started by the enemy. Not only should you yourself refuse to indulge in rumour and gossip: you should go further, and to the utmost of your power endeavour to prevent their circulation.

Further, I would mention the question of criticism. Uninformed criticism is of no value, and can do much harm. Before you criticize, therefore, be sure of your facts, and then make your criticism only to a proper and responsible authority.

In all these matters bear in mind first and foremost the interest of your country. Bear in mind the issues at stake. Remember also that the more senior you are, or the more important the position you hold, the greater will be the reliance placed on what you say, and the greater is the responsibility which rests on you.

As an officer of His Majesty's Forces, you are under a positive obligation to do everything in your power to maintain the morale of those Forces, and also that of your fellow countrymen. The greater the stress the more your fellow countrymen will look to you and rely upon you.

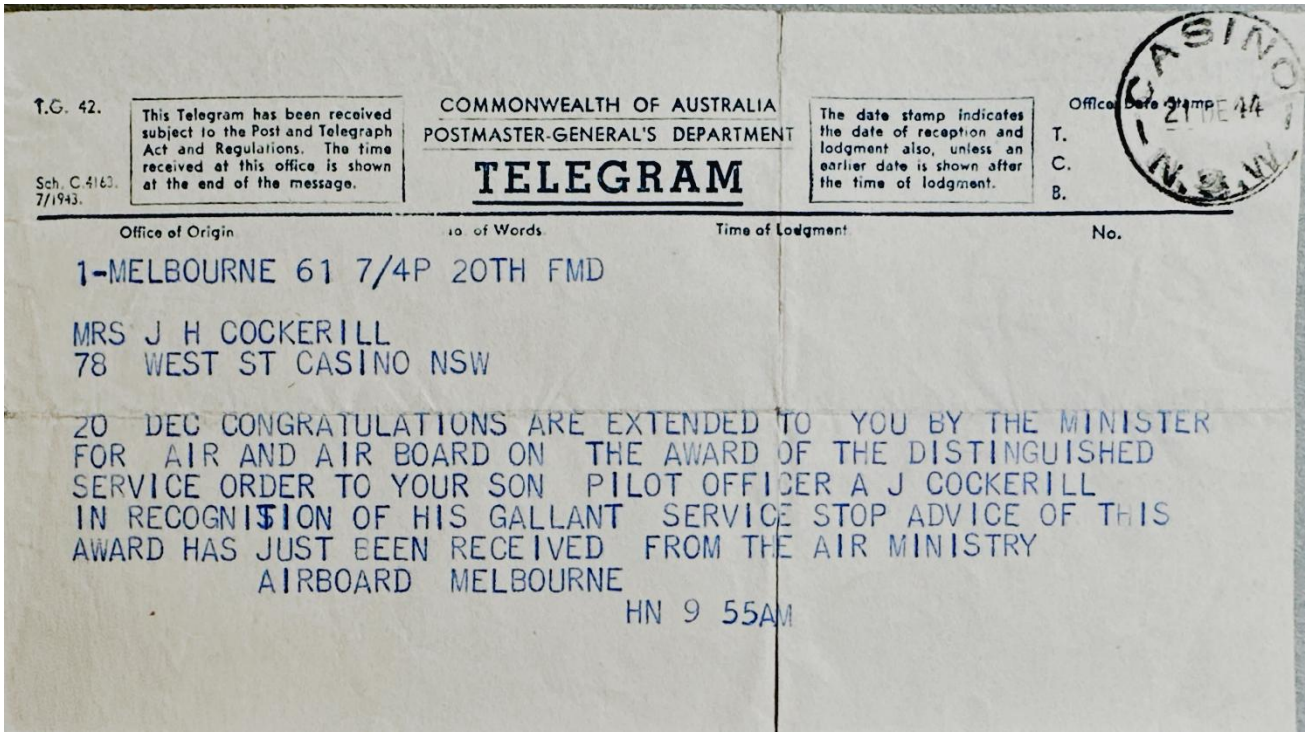
C. Portal.

Chief of the Air Staff.

THE AIR MINISTRY,
January, 1941.

(65954) Wt. 47363/M.3340 20,000 1/44 Hw. G.371

8: Letter sent on the occasion of Bert's commission as Pilot Officer.



T.G. 42.

Sch. C.4163. 7/1943.

This Telegram has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations. The time received at this office is shown at the end of the message.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

TELEGRAM

The date stamp indicates the date of reception and lodgment also, unless an earlier date is shown after the time of lodgment.

Office Date Stamp

T.
C.
B.

CASINO N.S.W. 21 DE 44

Office of Origin | No. of Words | Time of Lodgment | No.

1-MELBOURNE 61 7/4P 20TH FMD

MRS J H COCKERILL
78 WEST ST CASINO NSW

20 DEC CONGRATULATIONS ARE EXTENDED TO YOU BY THE MINISTER FOR AIR AND AIR BOARD ON THE AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER TO YOUR SON PILOT OFFICER A J COCKERILL IN RECOGNITION OF HIS GALLANT SERVICE STOP ADVICE OF THIS AWARD HAS JUST BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE AIR MINISTRY
AIRBOARD MELBOURNE
HN 9 55AM

9: Telegram of congratulations from the Australian Minister for Air.

25 FEB 1946

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

AIR BOARD
AIR FORCE HEAD-QUARTERS
ALBERT PARK BARRACKS, S.C.3

My dear Cockerill,

On the cessation of your service with the Royal Australian Air Force, I desire to express the appreciation of the Air Board for the valuable services you have performed since you joined the Air Force.

May I take this opportunity to extend the best wishes of the Air Board and myself for the future and express the hope that your return to civilian life meets with the success that your long and loyal service to your country so richly deserves.

Yours sincerely,

R. Hewitt.

Air Commodore,
Air Member for Personnel.

10: Letter of thanks from RAAF.

APPENDIX 8 – DSO, Awards and Certificate of Service

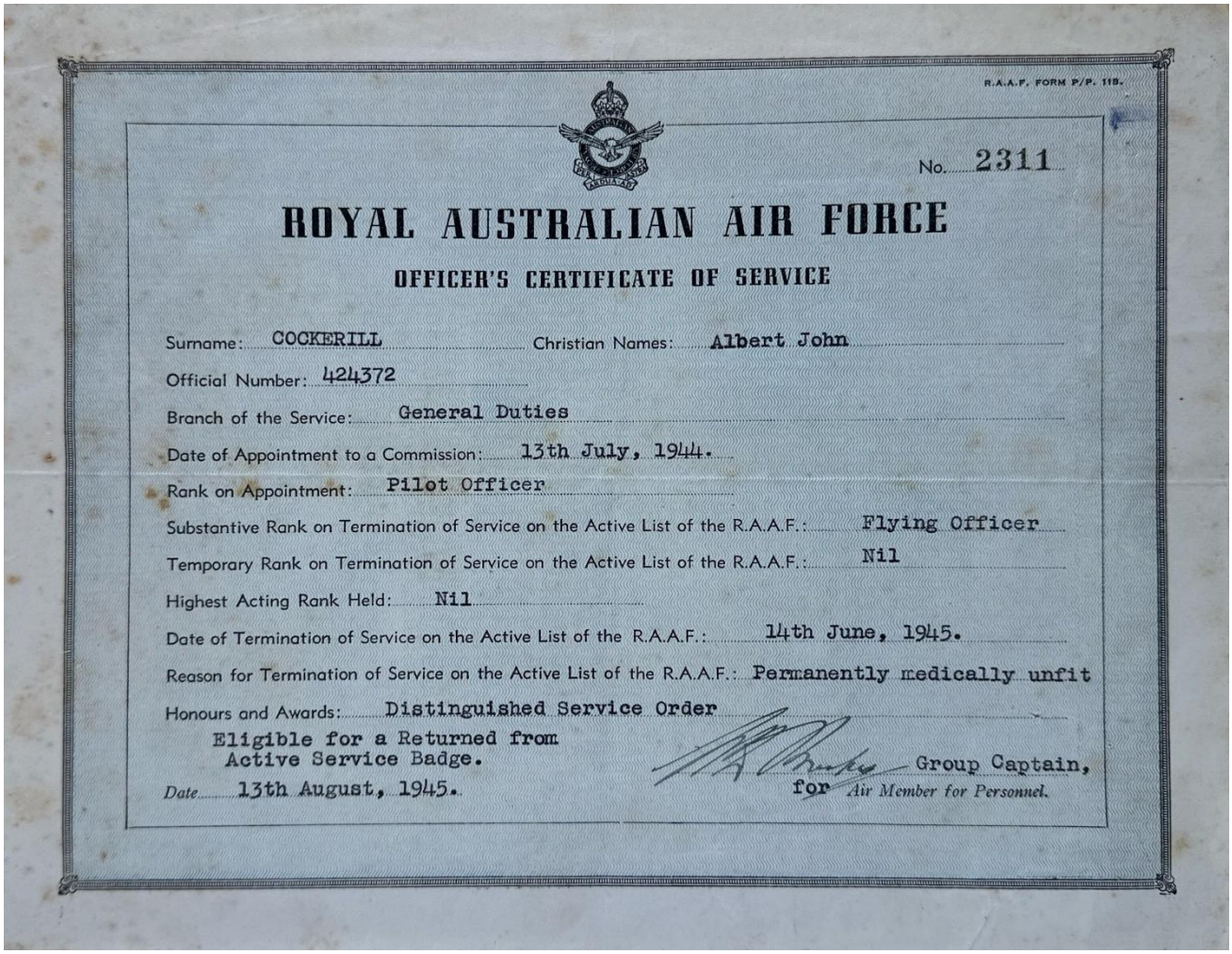
Here a range of items is gathered that belong together as a collation of Bert's service awards.

11: Nominal Roll Certificate.

For readers unfamiliar with such awards, the DSO is a highly significant military award of the United Kingdom, and formerly the Commonwealth awarded for operational gallantry for highly successful command and leadership during active operations, typically in actual combat. This military order is generally awarded to officers in command above the rank of major (or lieutenant-colonel, sources vary), with awards to lower ranks usually being for a high degree of gallantry, just short of deserving the Victoria Cross.

List of the Military Awards of A.J. Cockerill

Distinguished Service Order
The 1939-1945 Star
The France and Germany Star
The Defence Medal 1939-1945
War Medal 1939-1945
The Australian Service Medal 1939-1945



R.A.A.F. FORM P/P. 118.

No. 2311

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

OFFICER'S CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Surname: COCKERILL Christian Names: Albert John

Official Number: 424372

Branch of the Service: General Duties

Date of Appointment to a Commission: 13th July, 1944.

Rank on Appointment: Pilot Officer

Substantive Rank on Termination of Service on the Active List of the R.A.A.F.: Flying Officer

Temporary Rank on Termination of Service on the Active List of the R.A.A.F.: Nil

Highest Acting Rank Held: Nil

Date of Termination of Service on the Active List of the R.A.A.F.: 14th June, 1945.

Reason for Termination of Service on the Active List of the R.A.A.F.: Permanently medically unfit

Honours and Awards: Distinguished Service Order

Eligible for a Returned from Active Service Badge.

Date 13th August, 1945.

Group Captain,
for *Air Member for Personnel.*

12: Officer's Certificate of Service.

APPENDIX 9 – The New 462 Squadron Badge

Redesigned 462 RAAF Squadron
World War II Crest and Motto "Competence and Perseverance"

The motto "Competence and Perseverance" epitomises the Squadron's ability and tenacity in achieving objectives. The motif comprises three symbols representing the three major phases in which the Squadron was engaged in World War II.

At 10 o'clock position the canopy of a palm tree is shown. Palm trees are endemic around the Mediterranean area and North Africa. Therefore the palm tree represents the formation and operation of the Squadron in this theatre of war until it disbanded in Italy. The White Rose of Yorkshire at 2 o'clock position of the motif represents the fact that the Squadron re-formed later at Driffield in Yorkshire where it operated successfully as part of RAF Bomber Command's main force until it was transferred to Special Duties conducting radio counter-measures and spoof raids in the electronic phase of the war as part of 100 Group in Bomber Command.

The incoming and outgoing zig-zag lines represent these radio counter-measures and the clenched fist indicates the personal effort of Squadron personnel coming to grips with many tasks to achieve objectives and it also represents the knock out punch resulting in victory over the enemy.

The red, white and blue colours of the roundel and separating lines are those of the two flags under which we fought, that is, Australian flag and Union Jack of Great Britain.

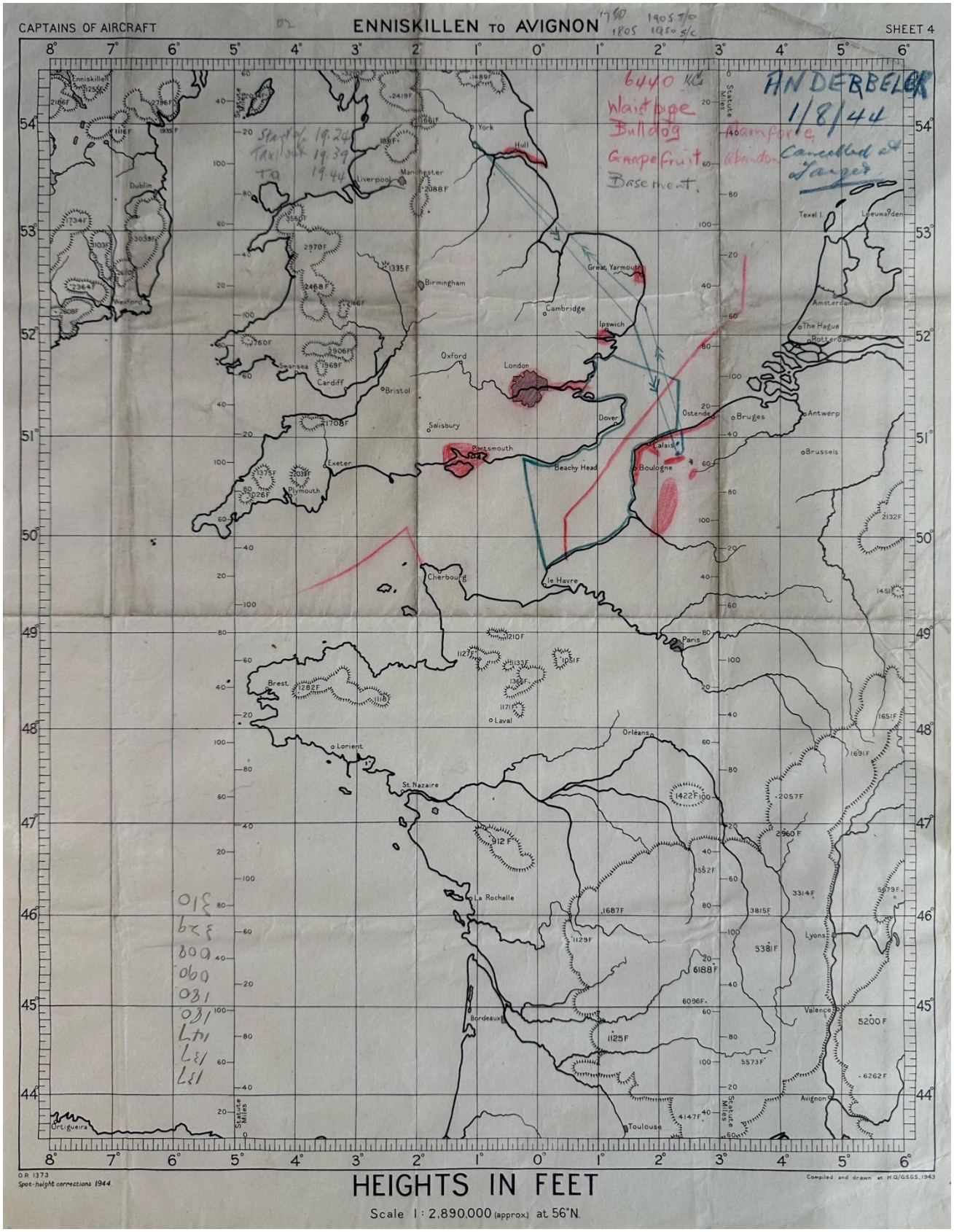
The background colour of the motif is the azure blue of the RAAF flag.

APPENDIX 10 – Summary of Operations and Maps

This appendix includes records and maps of Bert's 25 Operations.

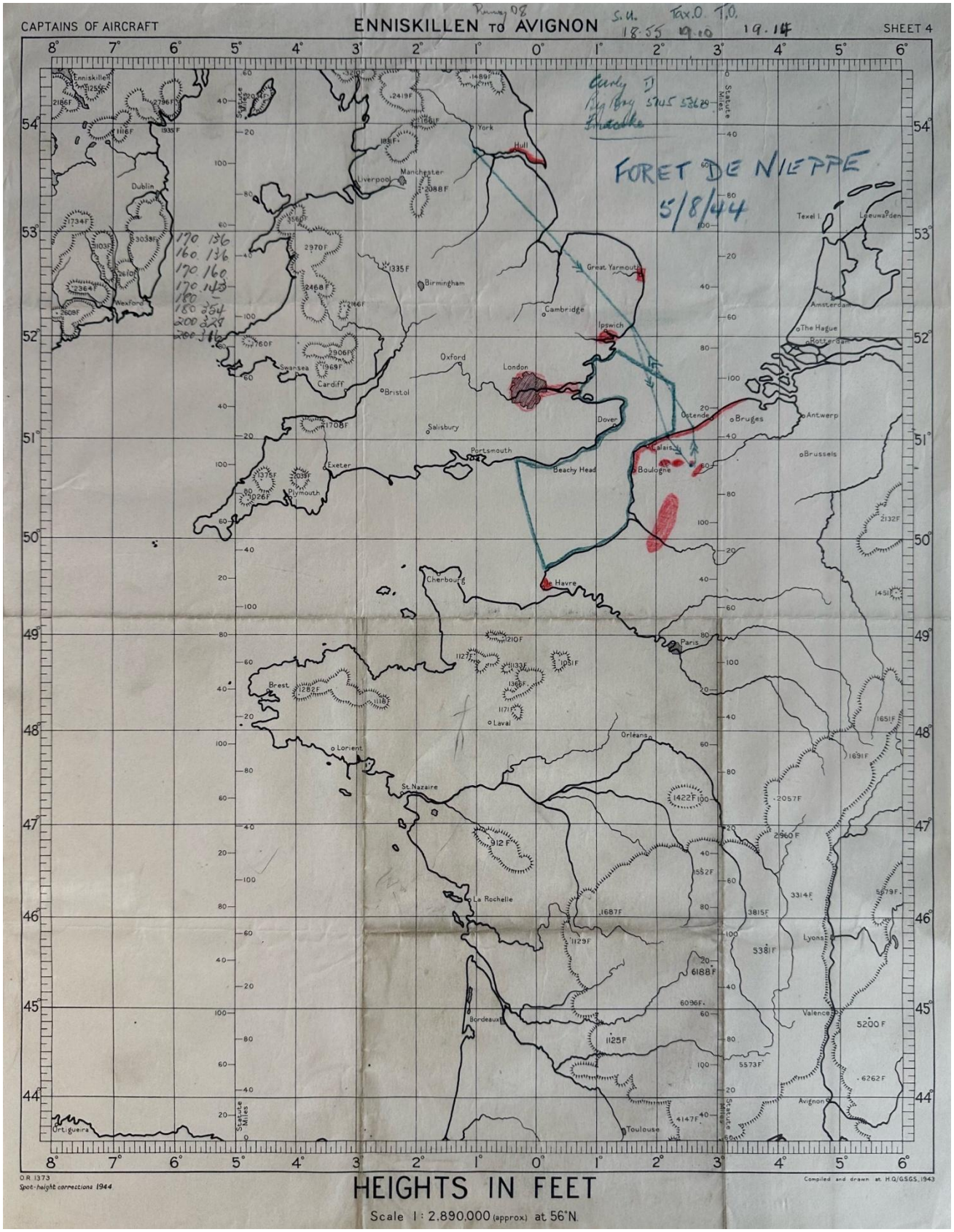
Date	Start	End	Target	Aircraft	Bomb lbs	Map pg	Other Comment
1/08/1944	19:35	22:55	Anderbelck, FR	LK-"A" LK843	9000	173	Cancelled on approach
3/08/1944	11:30	16:05	Bois de Cassan, FR	LK-"B" LL585	6500	174	
5/08/1944	11:05	14:55	Forêt de Nieppe, FR	LK-"H" LK809	9000	175	Monica 3 tail radar fitted
6/08/1944	19:20	22:50	Hazebrouck, FR	LK-"H" LK809	8000	-	
7/08/1944	21:05	00:55	St. Sylvain, FR	LK-"H" LK809	12000	176	Cancelled on approach
9/08/1944	11:15	14:20	Forêt de Mornal, FR	LK-"H" LK809	12000	177	Aborted due to starboard inner engine fail
11/08/1944	13:45	17:45	Somain, FR	LK-"A" LW556	12000	178	New aircraft
12/08/1944	21:25	03:40	Russelsheim, DE	LK-"E" LL584	8000	179	First for AJC to Germany; load included incendiaries
15/08/1944	10:15	14:25	Tirelemont, BE	LK-"E" LL584	11000	-	Monica 3 tail radar fitted
16/08/1944	21:25	03:05	Kiel, DE	LK-"C" LL548	6000	180 Maybe	Monica 3 tail radar fitted
18/08/1944	22:24	03:20	Sterkrade, DE	LK-"C" LL548	8000	181	Monica 3 tail radar fitted
3/09/1944	15:43	19:55	Soesterberg, DE	Z5 "B" SW440	11000	182	Start of ops with 462 Squadron
9/09/1944	06:25	10:30	Le Havre, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	8000	183	Cancelled at target due to cloud
10/09/1944	14:48	18:58	Le Havre, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	184	Code named Alvis
11/09/1944	06:12	10:02	Le Havre, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	185	Code named Cadillac
12/09/1944	11:17	15:57	Gelsenkirchen, DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	8000	186	
13/09/1944	16:03	20:38	Nordstern, Gelsenkirchen, DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	8000	187	
15/09/1944	22:38	03:58	Kiel U Boat base, DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	6500	188	A 2000 lb armour piercing bomb and 4500 lb incendiaries
17/09/1944	07:01	10:26	Boulogne, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	-	
23/09/1944	19:01	00:11	Neuss, Dusseldorf, DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	189	

25/09/1944	06:38	10:23	Calais, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	-	Cancelled at target due to cloud
26/09/1944	07:59	12:09	Cap Gris Nez, FR	Z5 "Q" NA619	11000	-	Code name "Calais"
30/09/1944	09:30	14:10	Bottrop, DE	Z5 "X" NP971	8000	190	First formation flying operation for squadron and led by AJC and crew
14/10/1944	06:27	12:07	Duisburg "R", DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	10000	191	
15/10/1944	00:12	04:53	Duisburg, DE	Z5 "Q" NA619	10000	192 Maybe	

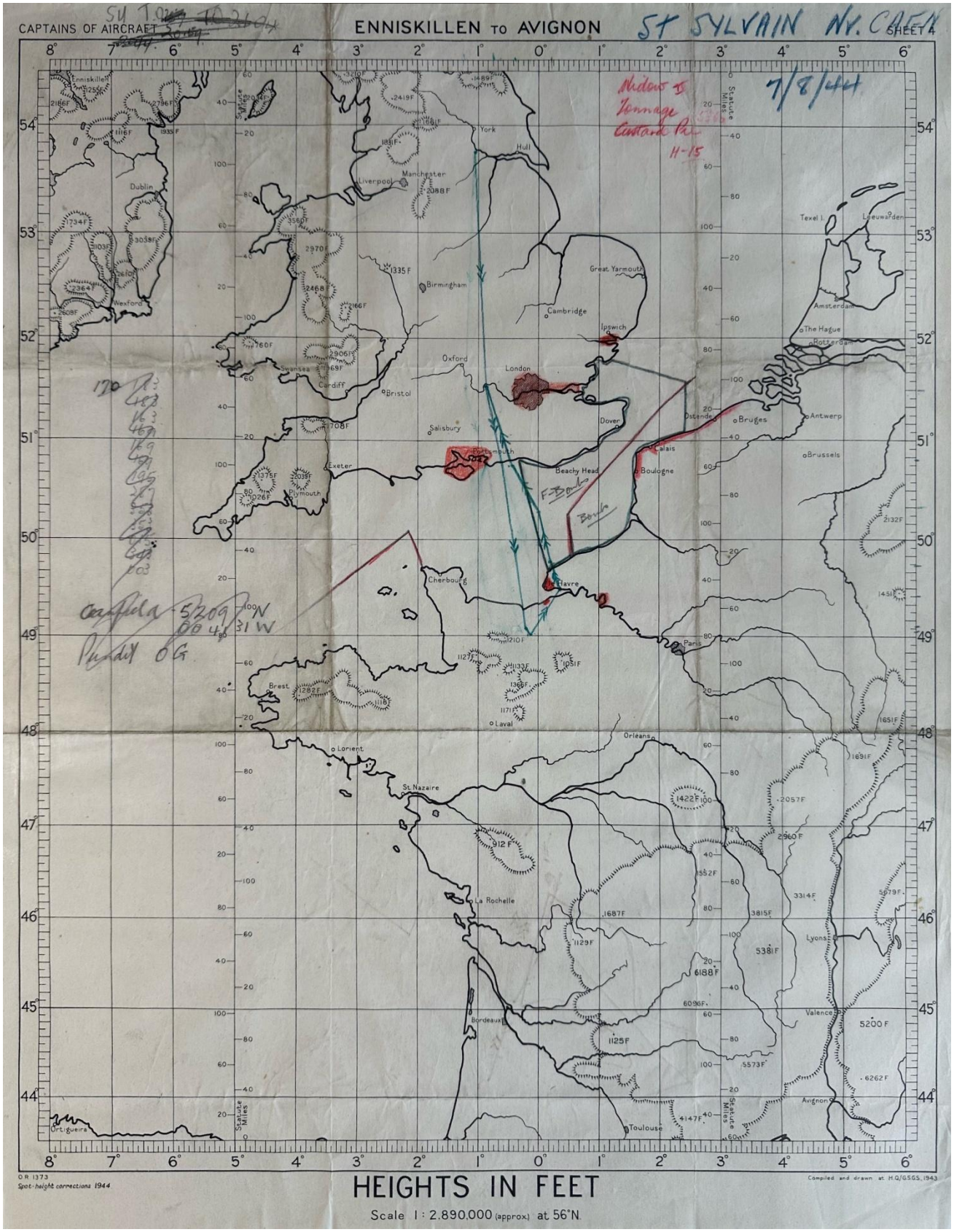


13: Op 1/8/44 Map - Anderbelck

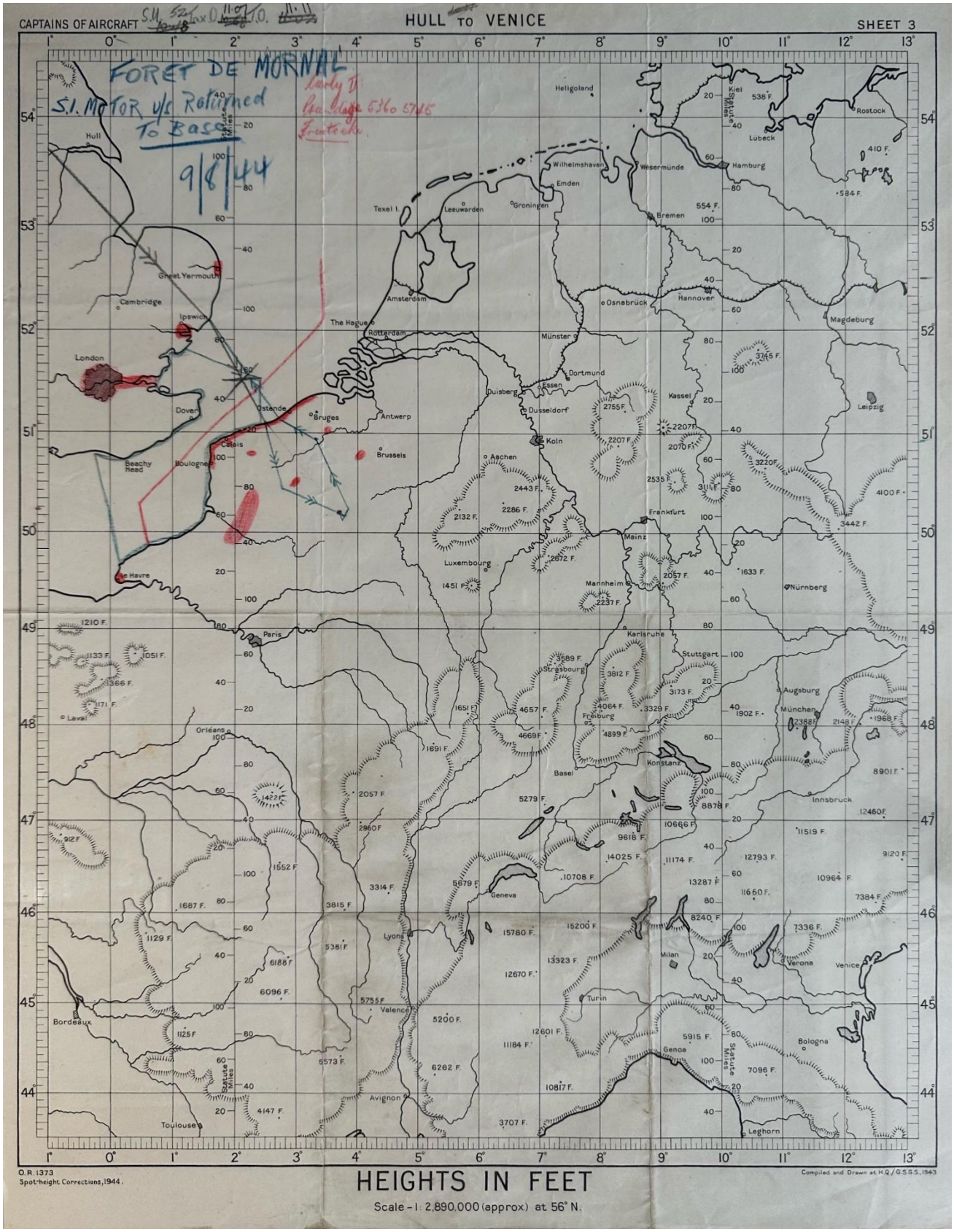
14: Op 3/8/44 Map - Bois de Cassan



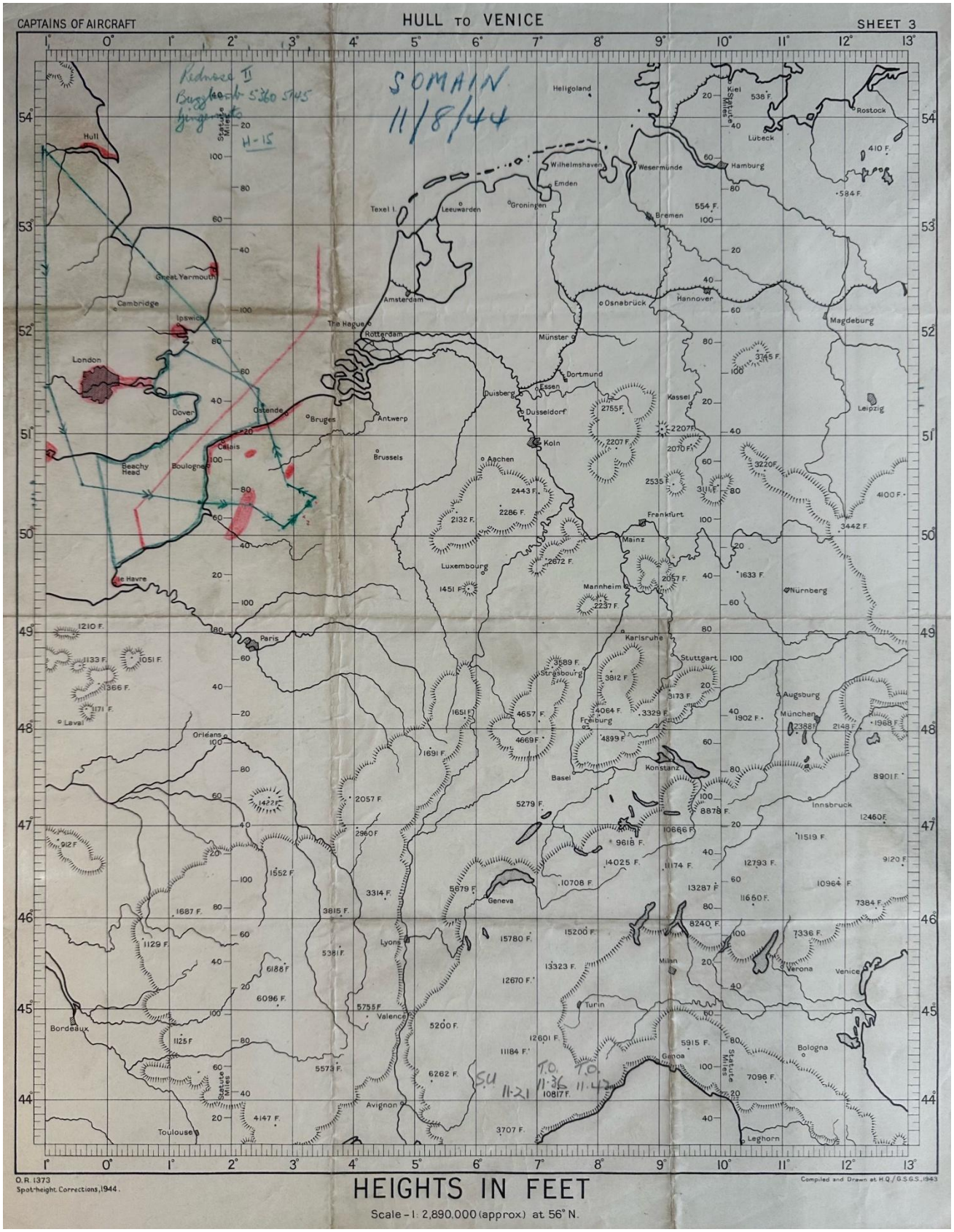
15: Op 5/8/44 Map - Forêt de Nieppe



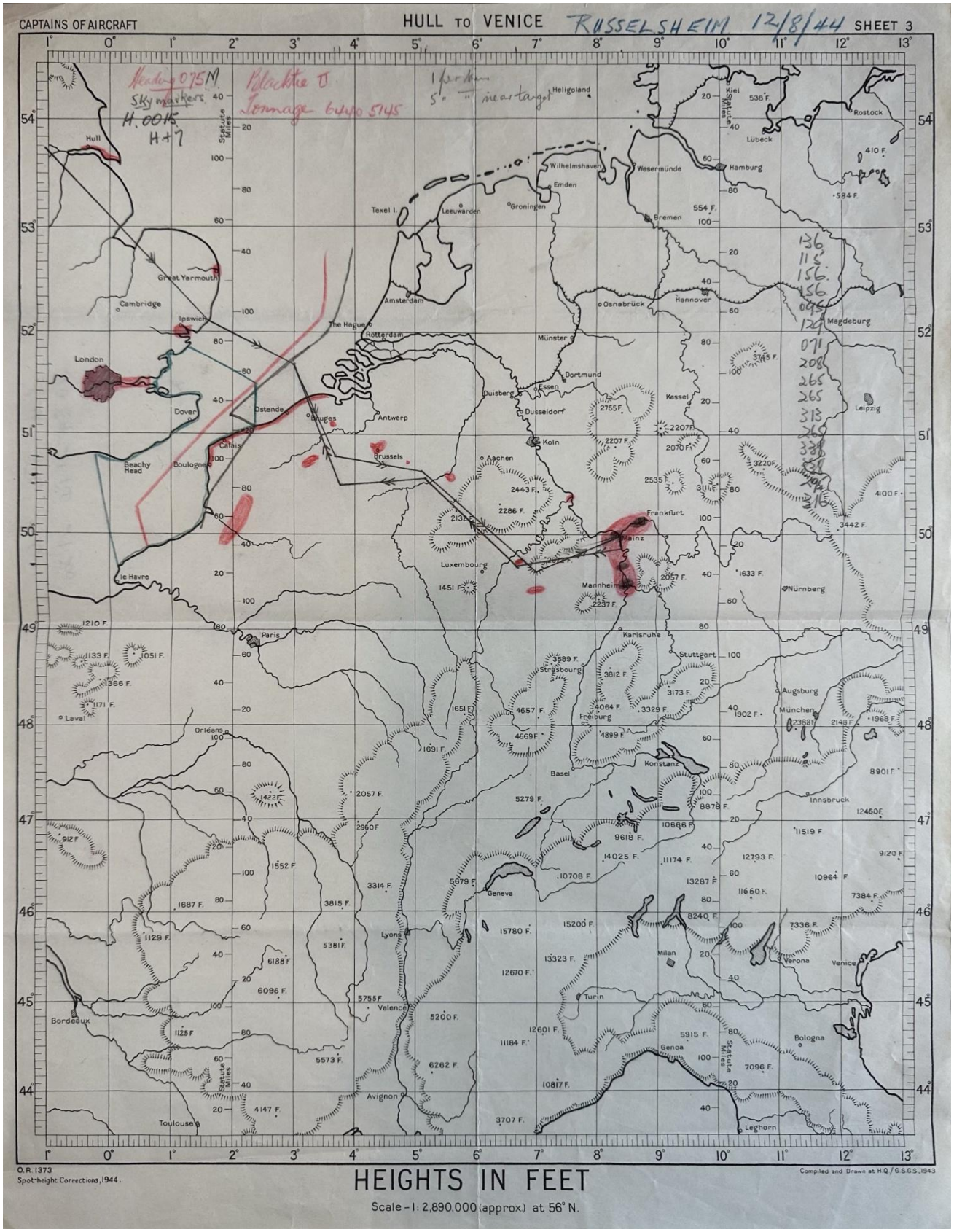
16: Op 7/8/44 St Sylvain



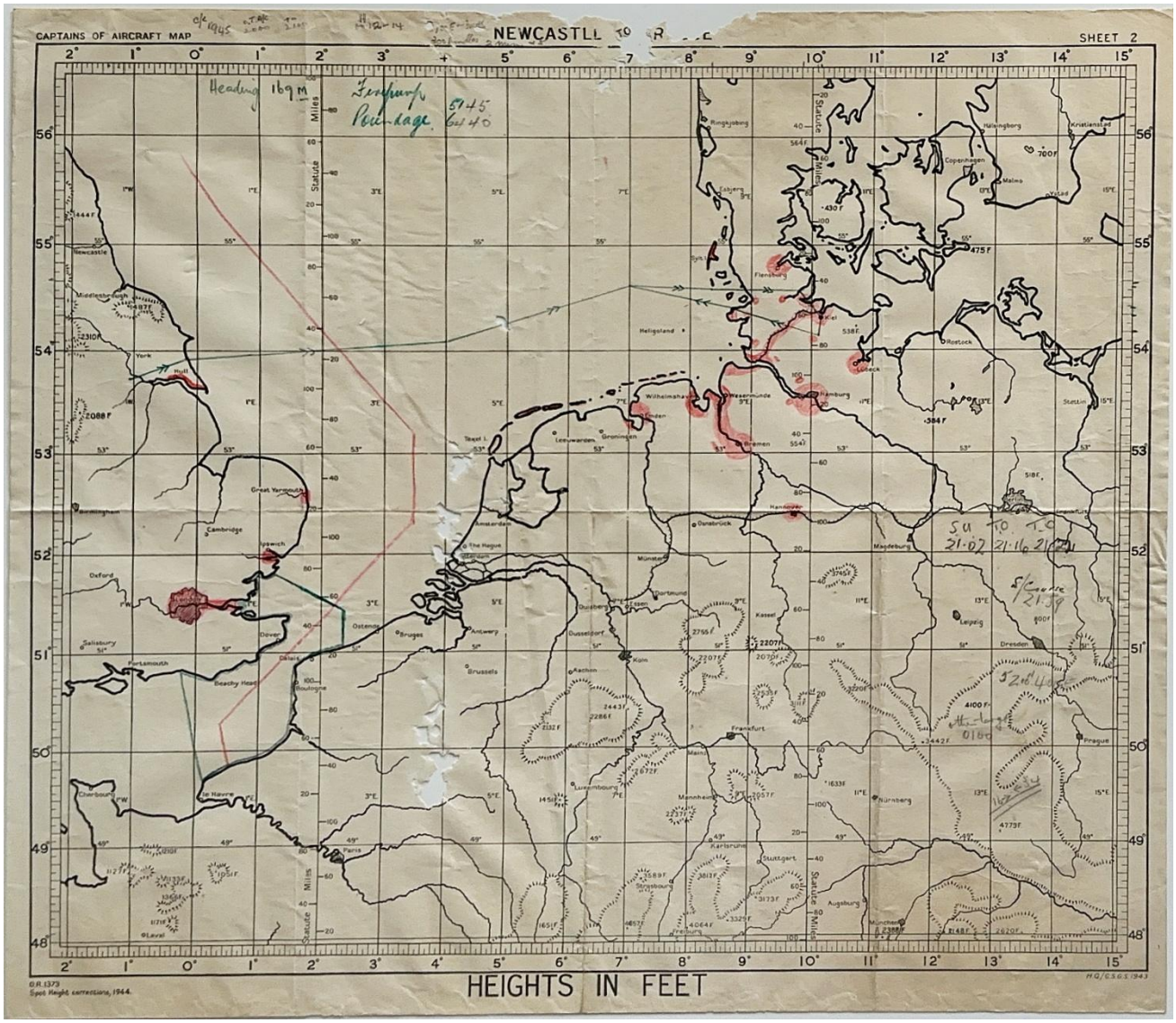
17: Op 9/8/44 Forêt de Mornal



18: Op 11/8/44 Somain

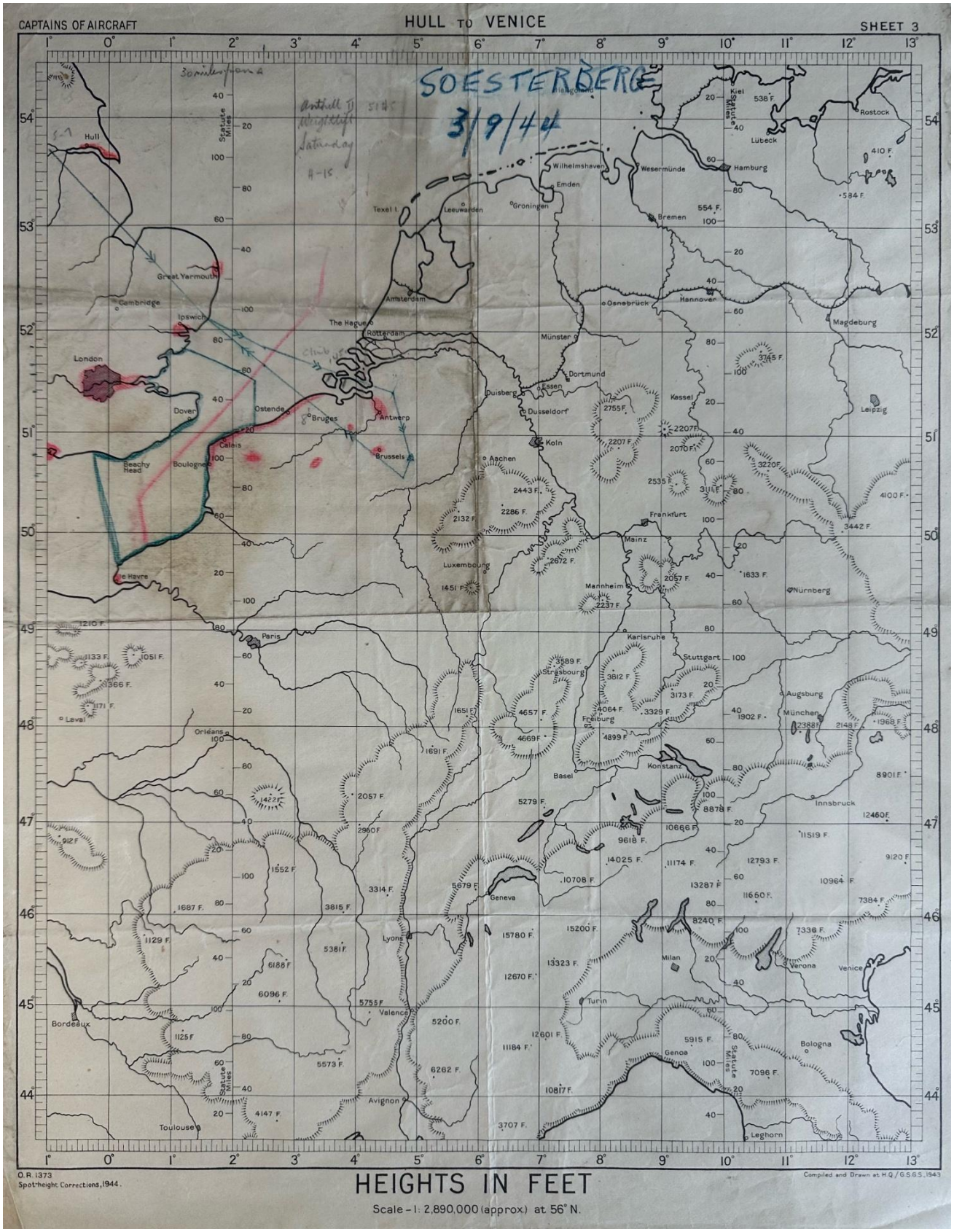


19: Op 12/8/44 Russelsheim

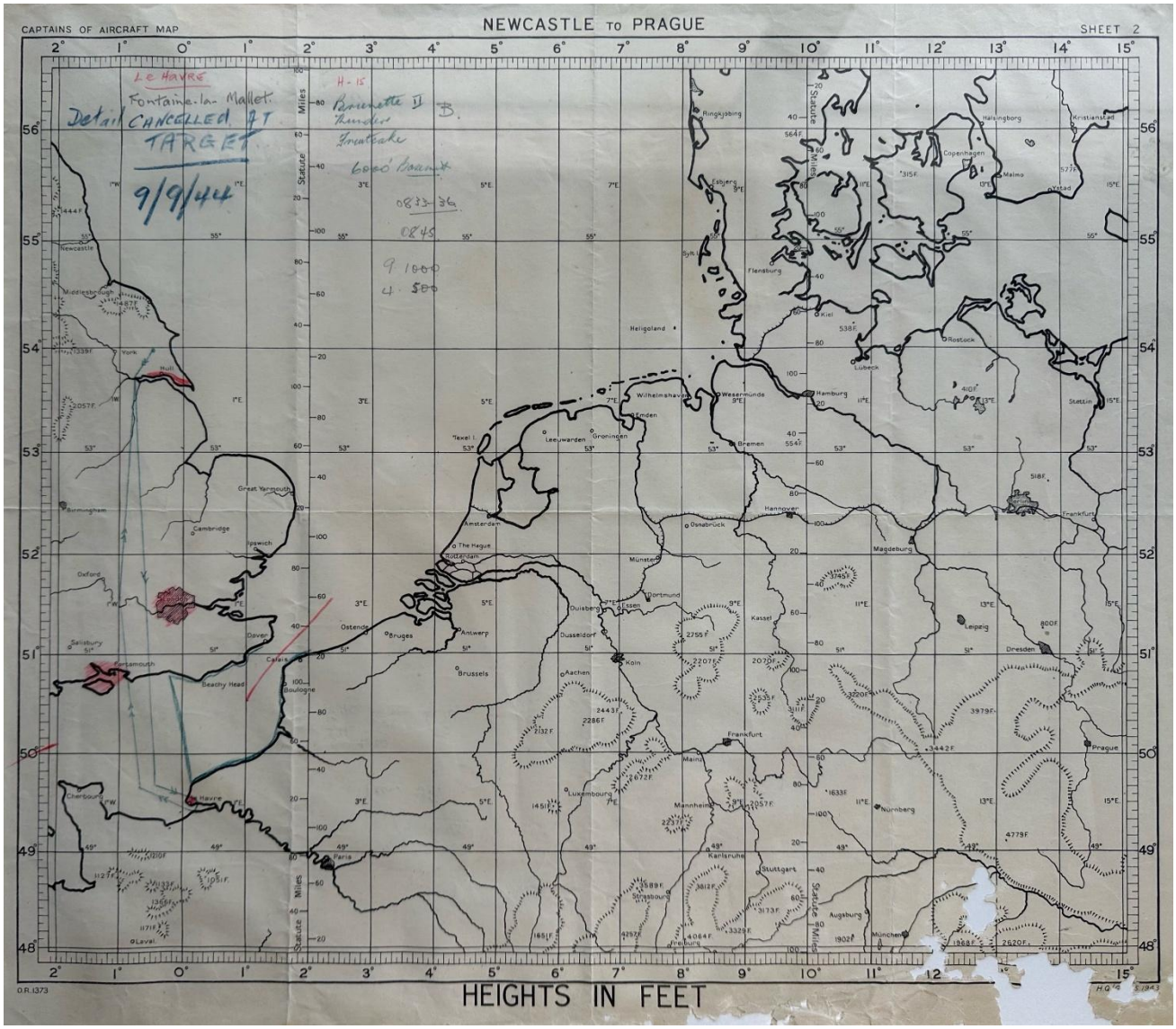


20: This is a Kiel mission, maybe 16/08/1944

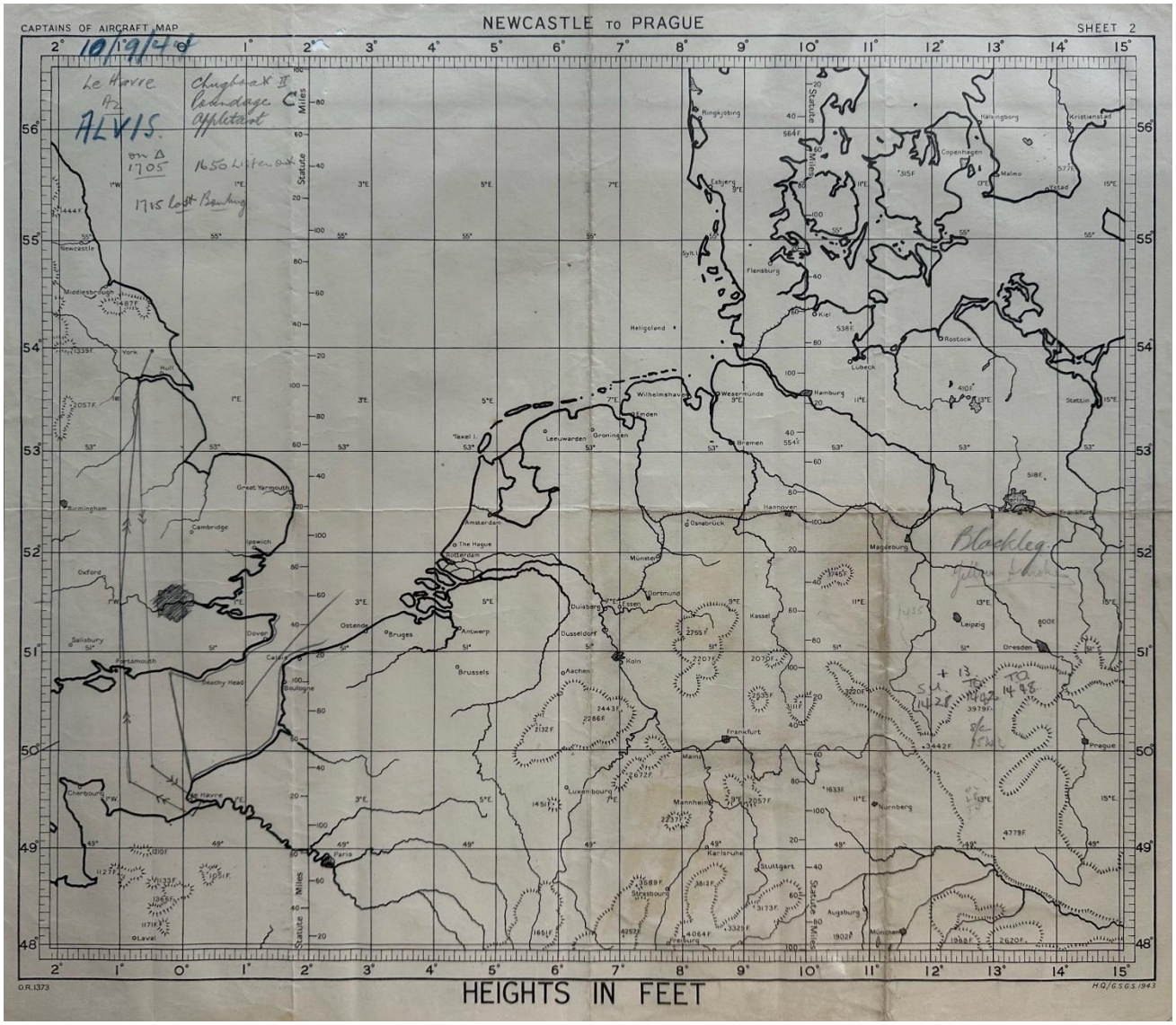
21: Op 18/8/44 Sterkrade



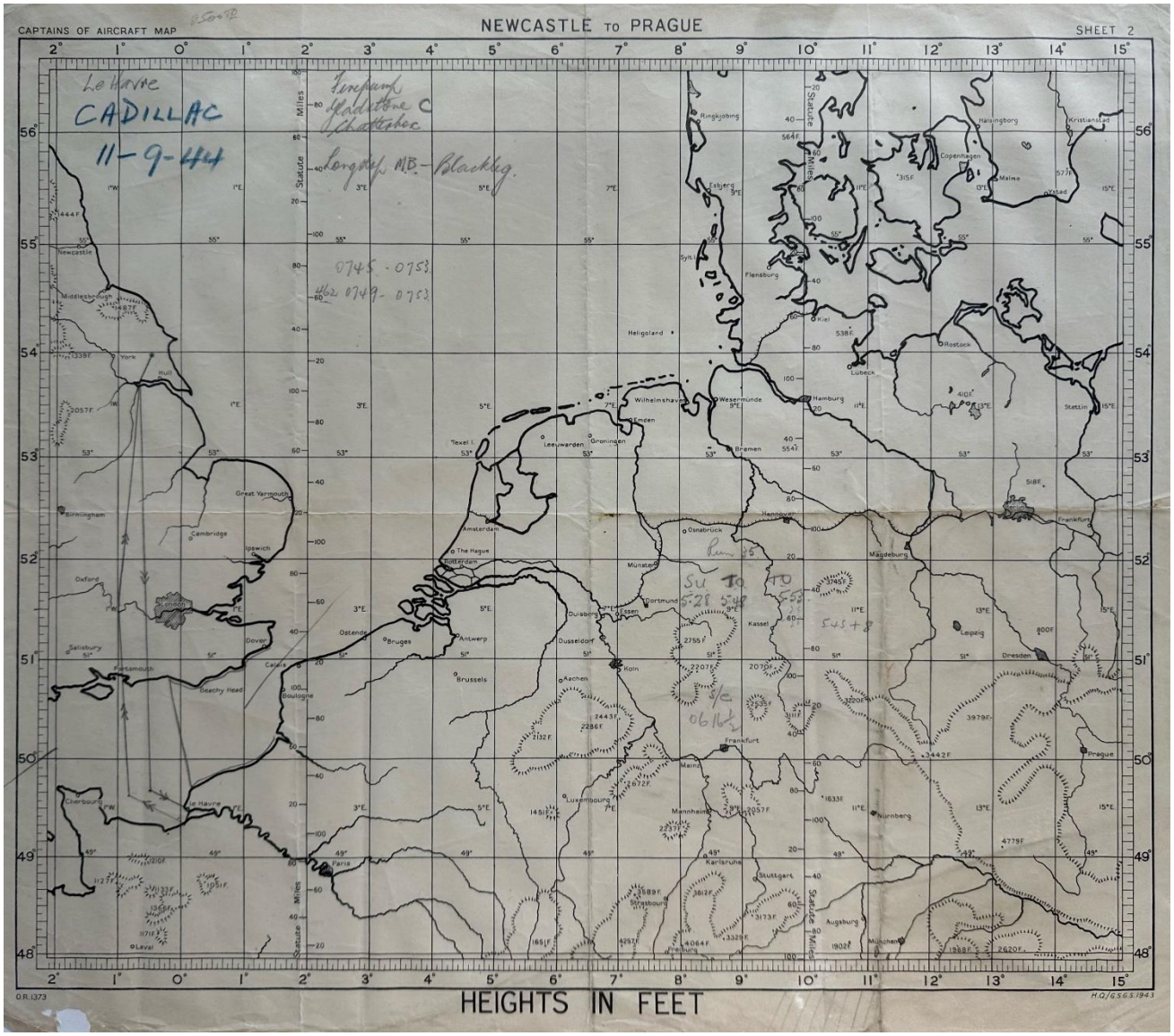
22: Op 3/9/44 Soesterberg



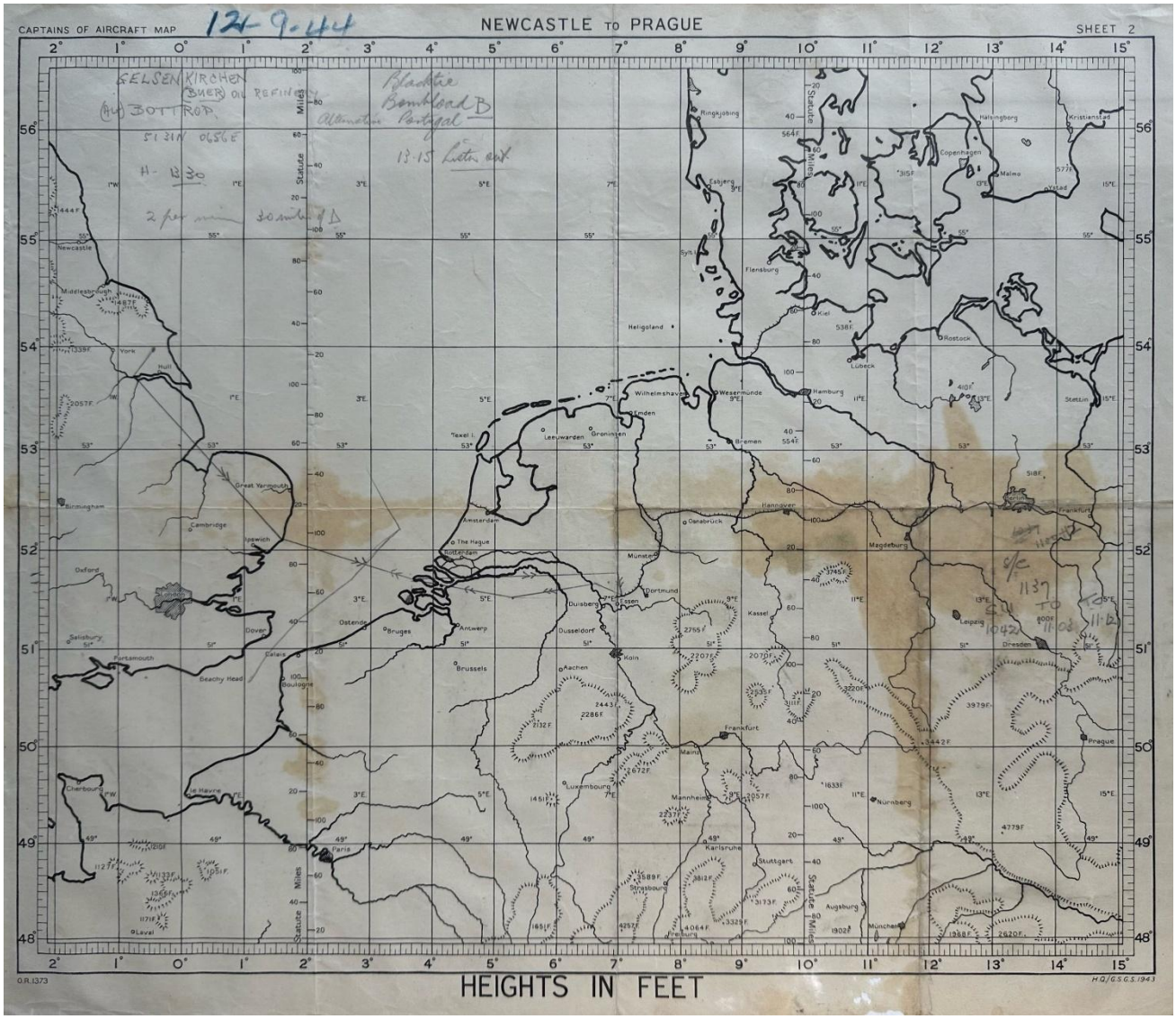
23: Op 9/9/44 Le Havre



24: Op 10/9/44 Alvis Le Havre

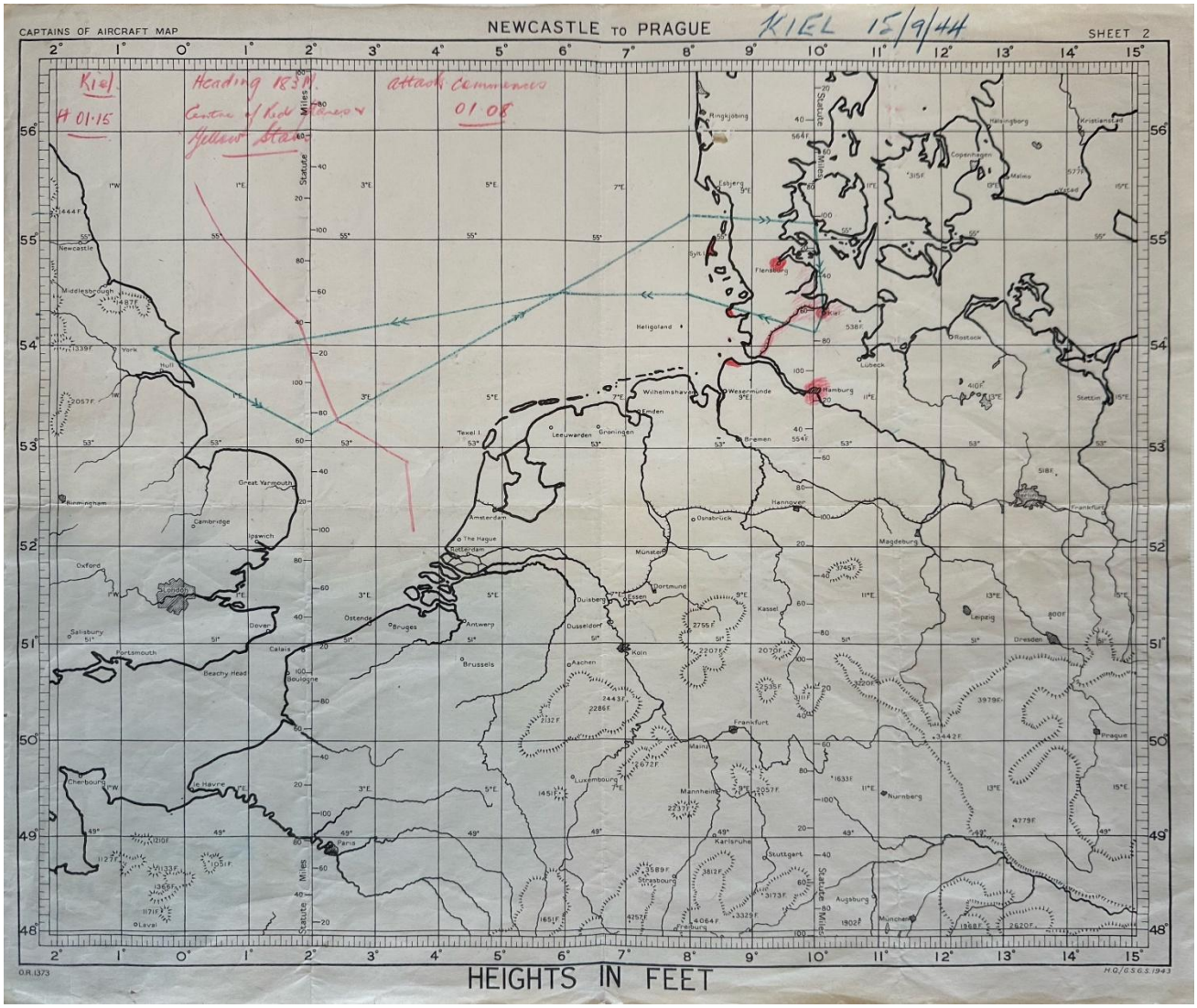


25: Op 11/9/44 Cadillac Le Havre

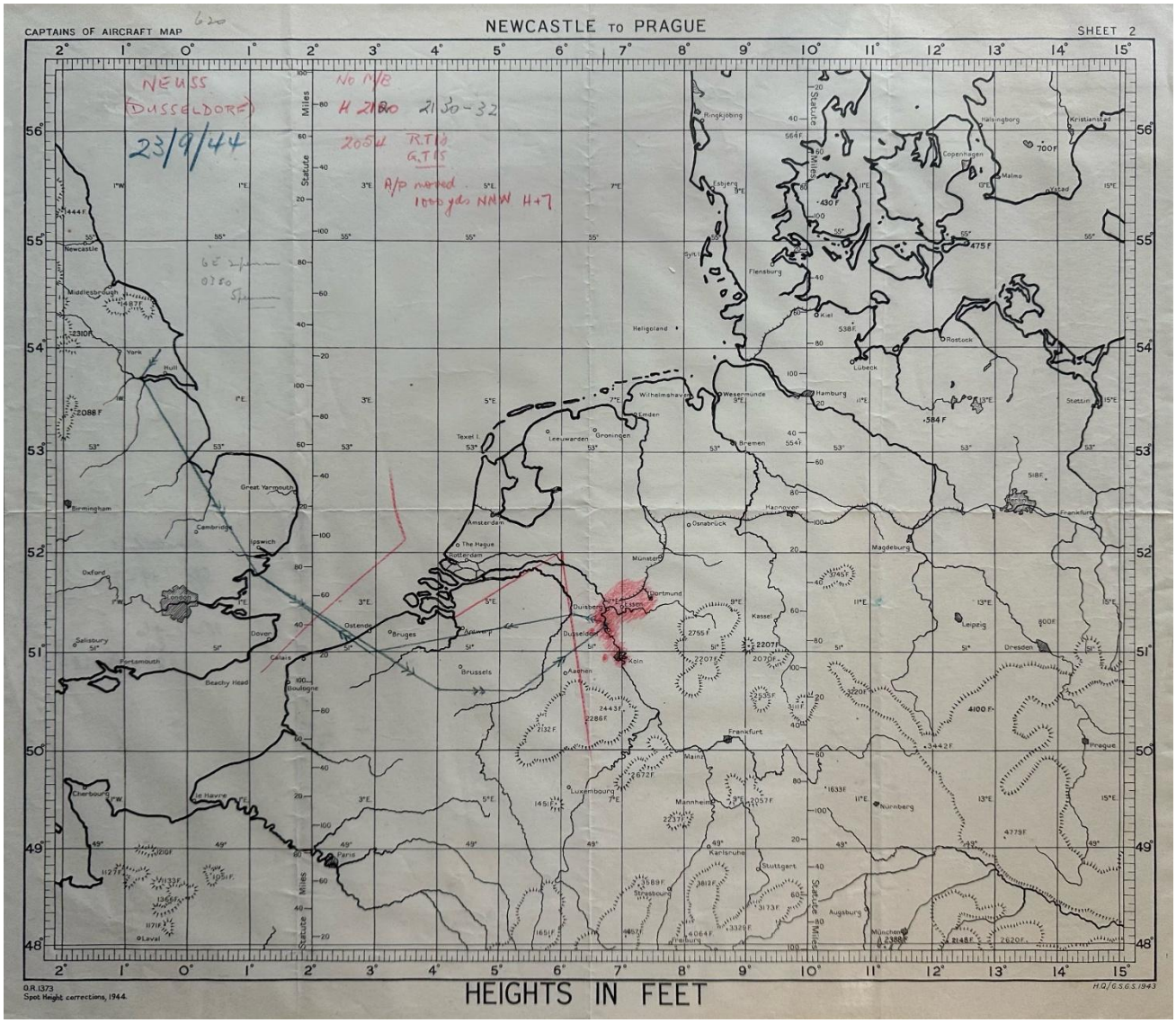


26: Op 12/9/44 Gelsenkirchen

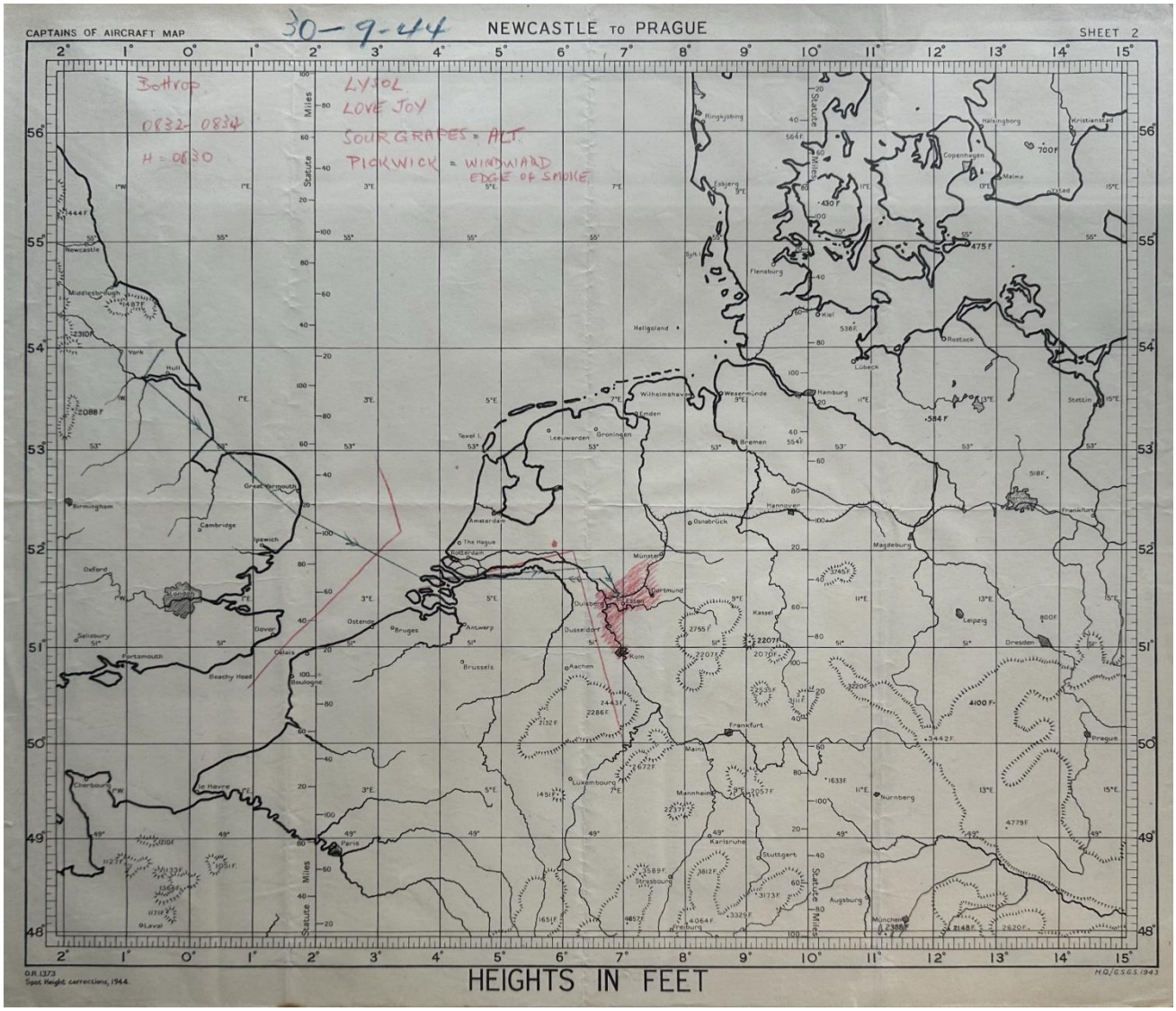
27: Op 13/9/44 Nordstern/Gelsenkirchen



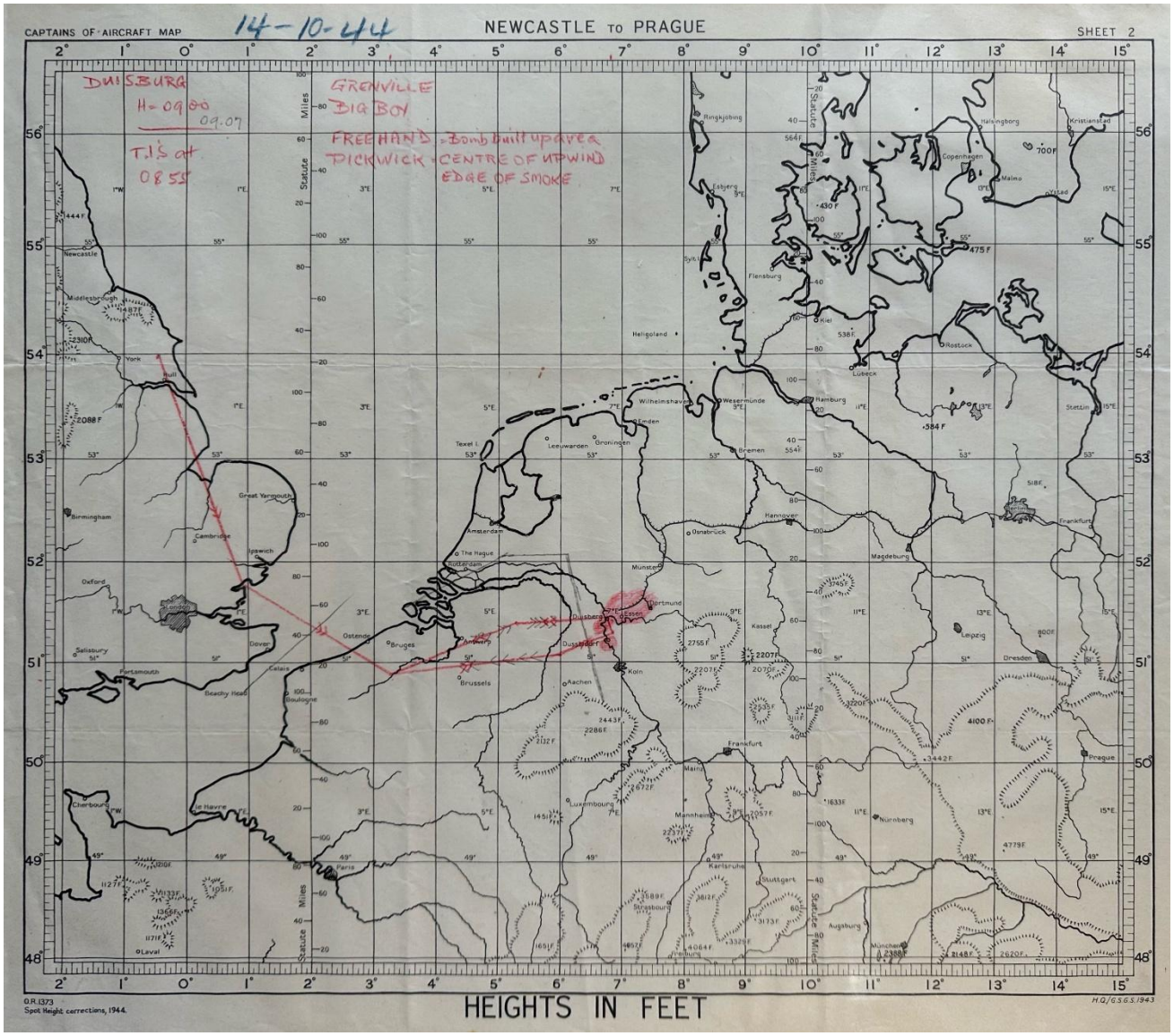
28: Op 15/9/44 Kiel



29: Op 23/9/44 Neuss/Dusseldorf



30: Op 30/9/44 Bottrop



31: Op 14/10/44 Duisburg "R"

32: Maybe Op 14-15/10/44 Duisberg AJC final